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# Labour pledges 80 new rape courts to tackle backlog crisis

- Plan for specialist unit in all police forces
- 'We'll halve violence against women'

**Toby Helm**
*Political Editor*

Labour will establish 80 new rape courts across and England and Wales to fast-track cases as part of wide-ranging plans to tackle violence against women and girls that will be announced in the party's general election manifesto this week.

The specialist courts will be set up in unused rooms and spare capacity within every existing crown court, in an effort to end a growing backlog that causes 60% of rape victims to drop out before their cases even begin.

Between the end of 2019 and the end of 2023, Labour says, there was a 346% increase in the number of adult rape cases in the crown court backlog, leading to claims that rape was effectively being "decriminalised".

Just 2.6% of rape cases result in a charge. Labour leader Keir Starmer has said he will halve violence against women and girls, and bring in tougher sentences for rapists, under his "missions" for government.

The party will also make a manifesto pledge to introduce specialist rape units in every police force, where staff trained to deal with domestic abuse will work with victims. Rape victims and others suffering domestic abuse will also be listed as "vulnerable", meaning their cases will be pushed through faster.

Starmer will unveil the Labour manifesto on Thursday as the election campaign enters a new phase, based more on actual policy commitments. Party sources said it would

*Continued on page 9* »

**Brexit silence**
**Nothing has left a wound as gaping yet neither Sunak nor Starmer have mentioned it**
*Andrew Rawnsley, p43*

**A father's embrace**



*Israeli hostage Noa Argamani, 25, is reunited with her father, Yakov Argamani, after being freed by special forces. Reuters*

# Israel celebrates rescue of four hostages as airstrikes and raids kill 93 Palestinians

**Emma Graham-Harrison**
*Tel Aviv*

Israeli special forces have freed four hostages held in Nuseirat, central Gaza, as Israeli attacks and airstrikes in the same area killed at least 93 Palestinians, including children, local medics said.

The rescue raid was the largest of the war, bringing three men and a woman who were kidnapped at the Nova music festival back to Israel.

They were named as Noa Argamani, 25, Almog Meir Jan, 21, Andrey Kozlov, 27, and Shlomi Ziv, 40.

While Israelis celebrated the return of the hostages last night, Palestinians in Gaza mourned dozens of dead, or watched over loved ones in the overcrowded al-Aqsa martyrs' hospital, the only one in the area that is still partly functioning. The bodies of nearly 100 Palestinians were brought to the hospital along with more than 100 injured, a spokesperson, Khalil Degran, told AP. The news agency's reporters also counted dozens of bodies, including a baby.

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, described the Israeli

*Continued on page 2* »








*Clockwise from main: Almog Meir Jan is reunited with his mother yesterday: Shlomi Ziv being welcomed back, and freed hostage Andrey Kozlov.* *Israel Foreign Ministry, UPI/ Rex/Shutterstock, Israeli Army/ Reuters*

# Israeli special forces rescue four hostages in operation that kills 93 Palestinians and wounds 100

>> *Continued from page 1*

attacks as a "bloody massacre" and called for an emergency UN security council session.

The top EU diplomat, Josep Borrell, condemned "in the strongest terms… reports from Gaza of another massacre of civilians". In a post on X he called for a ceasefire and the release of all remaining hostages. "The bloodbath must end immediately."

Israeli military spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari confirmed there were dozens of Palestinians killed. He knew that "under 100" casualties had been reported, but could not say how many were civilians, he told a briefing.

Special forces operated under heavy fire in a "complex urban environment" to carry out the rescue, the Israeli defence minister, Yoav Gallant, said, describing it as one of the most extraordinary operations he had seen in a decades-long military career.

Troops deployed for the raid included air force and special forces, with naval support. One team extracting the hostages was confronted by militants, and when a rescue vehicle got stuck called in back-up, escaping under heavy bombardment, channel 12 television reported.

Benjamin Netanyahu said the raid, only the third successful military rescue of the war, was a historic achievement and proof "Israel does not surrender to terrorism". One officer from the counter-terrorism police unit was killed in the raid.

The Israeli prime minister has long insisted that military pressure is the best way to ensure the return of all Israelis captured on 7 October last year. But as the war drags on into its ninth month, he has come under increasing international pressure to agree a ceasefire deal as well as domestic pressure to secure the return of all Israelis still held in Gaza.

Seven hostages have now been freed by Israeli forces, but the majority of those who are now back home were handed over under a temporary ceasefire deal last November. There are still 120 Israelis in Gaza, a third of them presumed dead.

> *'The hostages don't have time. We can't free everyone. We must go for a deal that will save lives'*
> *Ayala Metzger, relative*





BELOW
*Left, wreckage in the Nuseirat refugee camp yesterday after the Israeli raid; right, injured Palestinians receive treatment at al-Awda hospital.*

Hostages' families welcomed the return of the four freed yesterday but said the military could not bring back all of those still held captive, and instead called on the government to reach a ceasefire deal to free their loved ones.

"The hostages don't have time. We can't free everyone in operations, and we must go for a deal that will save lives," said Ayala Metzger, the daughter-in-law of hostage Yoram Metzger, who this week was reported to have died in captivity.

A spokesman for Hamas's armed al-Qassam brigades, Abu Ubaida, claimed that some Israeli hostages had been killed during the rescue raid, without giving evidence or further details.

All four of the freed hostages were healthy and were reunited with their families after medical tests in an Israeli hospital.

Palestinian militants took 250 people to Gaza on 7 October. Argamani had become one of the most well-known of the Israelis kidnapped that day after video that captured her shouting "Don't kill me" as she was abducted by two men on a motorbike was widely shared after the attack. Her mother, Liora Argamani, who has stage four cancer, had said her greatest wish was to see her daughter again, and the two were reunited last night in a Tel Aviv hospital.

It was Argamani's father's birthday yesterday and he met her soon after she landed back on Israeli soil. He described her release as a "gift", in a statement that also called on Israelis to join the rally for the release of other hostages.

Argamani also spoke on the phone to the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, telling him it was good to hear Hebrew spoken again, and to the president, Isaac Herzog.

US intelligence was reportedly involved in supporting the Israeli mission, and President Joe Biden welcomed the return of the four hostages.

He has been pushing hard for a deal to halt the war and secure the return of everyone held in Gaza and said that effort would continue.

"We won't stop working until all the hostages come home and a ceasefire is reached," he said at a joint press conference with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron.

He has apparently been frustrated by resistance in the Israeli government to negotiating a halt to fighting, suggesting in a recent interview that Netanyahu might be prolonging the war to protect his personal political interests.

The Israeli leader has repeatedly said the war will not end until Hamas is "destroyed" and all hostages are home. Hamas says it will not accept a temporary halt in fighting.

Yesterday's rescue operation may give Netanyahu a temporary relief from domestic pressure to reach a hostage release deal.

After the news broke, his political rival, Benny Gantz, a security cabinet member, delayed a speech planned for yesterday evening.

He had been widely expected to announce he was leaving the government, having given Netanyahu an ultimatum to form a long-term plan for Gaza.

Gantz will now consult allies on whether the hostage release raid represents a fundamental change in the course of the war, and if he should reconsider his decision to quit, *Haaretz* reported.

Netanyahu called on Gantz to stay in the government, in a post on X yesterday evening, saying: "This is a time for unity".

Gantz posted an ambivalent reply, saying the prime minister and his team must "look responsibly at how best we might continue from here".

*Additional reporting by Matan Cohen*

# Watching Kane and co down the local? Sorry, it's a sellout

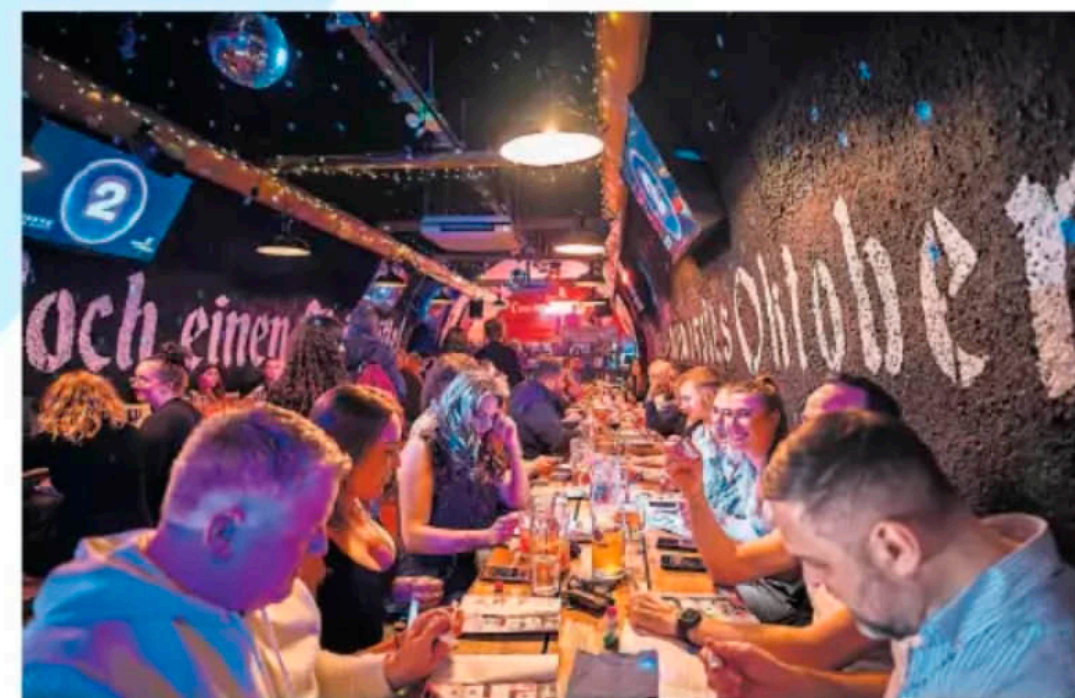
A few beers for the big game requires more planning than it used to – which is good news for the pub trade. *James Tapper* reports



*LEFT*
*On Father's Day pubs expect families of fans, such as those who watched the Euro 2020 final at Holbeck Working Men's Club in Leeds.* Mark Waugh/ the Observer



*LEFT*
*Fans at the pop-up Wembley Boxpark bar during an England game in last year's Women's World Cup.* Victoria Jones/PA



*RIGHT*
*Bermondsey's Bierkeller has reported high demand for bookings to see international games featuring stars such as Bukayo Saka, left.*

Football fans used to worry about getting a ticket into the ground. Now they are fretting about being able to book a place at the bar.

Bookings to watch England in Euro 2024 have soared in the last week as fans cottoned on to the fact that the nation's first game in the tournament against Serbia will also fall on Father's Day, this Sunday 16 June.

Although pubs and bars have seen customer numbers fall during the cost of living crisis, there is a strong appetite for following both England's and Scotland's fortunes in Germany.

Nearly half (46%) of British adults plan to watch the tournament, according to market researcher CGA by NIQ, with most planning to watch in a pub or a bar. And, unlike previous tournaments, people seem more likely to plan ahead, with some booking pubs more than two months in advance.

Fanzo, the sports bar finding site, said that bookings were at the same level as they were during Euro 2020, which was held in 2021 during the pandemic, when Covid rules meant pubs had to provide table service.

Searches on Fanzo and DesignMyNight revealed that plenty of venues were already full to capacity, a week before England's opening game. Larger ones were particularly popular – Box in Leeds city centre, Bermondsey Bierkeller in London and the capital's BoxParks in Shoreditch and Wembley had no tickets left.

Jim Gallivan, general manager of the Bermondsey Bierkeller, said he had expected that people would celebrate Father's Day in suburban areas rather than coming into city centres.

"I thought it would be challenging to sell evening tickets as it's Father's Day, but surprisingly they've gone a lot quicker than I thought," he said.

The British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA) estimates that total sales during the four weeks of the tournament will be nearly 300m pints – both alcoholic and low- or no-alcohol – worth £1.4bn. England's fortunes are a key factor, according to the BBPA's statisticians, who calculate that pubs will sell about 19.5m extra pints even if the team only puts on an average performance. Should they reach the quarter finals, that would mean up to 8m extra pints per game.

Despite the rivalry with England, it seems that plenty of people in the south are also keen to watch Scotland – there are more bookings on Fanzo to watch their opening match against Germany on Friday than England's third group-stage game against Slovenia on 25 June.

But the really big match will be England v Denmark, which accounts for 44.9% of bookings for all Euros games so far, according to Dominic Collingwood, Fanzo's co-founder.

"In general, pre-tournament bookings are in line with 2021, which is remarkable given it was a requirement to book three years ago, due to Covid restrictions," he said. "People don't have cash in their pockets at the moment and you've got pints at £7.20."

As a result people tended to go out less often, but spent more when they did, Collingwood said, which meant that pub operators had seen their revenues flatten out. But people would still come out to watch sport in the same numbers as they used to, which offered a glimmer of hope to the pub trade.

The growth of large fanzone-style venues was also playing a part, Collingwood added. "We've seen the 'Boxparkification' of top sports sites – turning games into a full-day event with music and entertainment."

Emma McClarkin, BBPA chief executive, said: "The pub was missed by so many people during lockdown, and the pandemic had a devastating impact on a sector which has faced significant challenges since."

The importance of sport means that gastropubs are also trying to find ways to screen football matches. Sam Bourke, marketing director at Fuller, Smith & Turner, the pub and hotel group, said some people were booking spots up to two months before the games.

She said the firm had invested in new screens, and staff would turn up the sound when the teams came out on to the pitch. "Attention to detail is everything – [we want to make sure customers] never miss the collective emotion of the national anthem, and no moments are missed because of a wait at the bar."

**ON OTHER PAGES**

**Euros stir German memories of glory days – on and off the pitch** Focus, pages 38–39

**Euro 2024 preview** Sport, 6–11

# Fans call foul over England's Euro sticker album debacle

**James Tapper**

Adding stickers of your favourite players into an album is arguably one of the few innocent pleasures that remain for football fans. But children and seasoned collectors have discovered that even this gentle pastime has been affected by modern football's passion for money.

The Panini sticker album has been a staple of international tournaments since the 1970s. But after Uefa sold the rights for stickers for Euro 2024 to its American rival, Topps, Panini launched an alternative "England 2024" album, using rights held by England, Italy, Germany and France that were not part of Uefa's deal.

It means that fans cannot fill an album with players in their kits from all 24 nations in this year's tournament, and some big names are missing from the official Topps collection, including Phil Foden, John Stones and Marcus Rashford. To make up the numbers Topps has been forced to include lesser-known footballers, including some who have never even played for England such as the Leicester City defender Luke Thomas.

Now the Consumers' Association, publisher of *Which?* magazine, has criticised Uefa, Panini and Topps for an "embarrassing episode" that has "left football fans in the lurch". Collectors are disappointed, and some have accused Panini of pettiness, while others are concerned future tournaments will be even more disrupted.

"It's really disappointing that Uefa and sticker companies have left football fans in the lurch ahead of the Euros," Lisa Webb, *Which?* consumer law expert, said. "Football bosses and sticker companies need to put supporters first and come up with a solution to ensure there is no repeat of this embarrassing episode."

Stickers may be simple, but they are governed by image rights and intellectual property. And sticker collecting is a gateway to trading cards, which is hugely popular in the US, with rare cards autographed by sports players fetching huge sums.

Meanwhile, fans have been left to pick up the pieces. Matt Blazey, who has been collecting for 20 years and runs the Blazey Collects channel, said: "A lot of people have seen Topps taking the Euros as Americans coming in and taking something from Panini, an Italian company that has a very rich heritage in Europe. So I think some people have felt threatened."



*Panini lost the Euro deal and now has its own England stickers.*

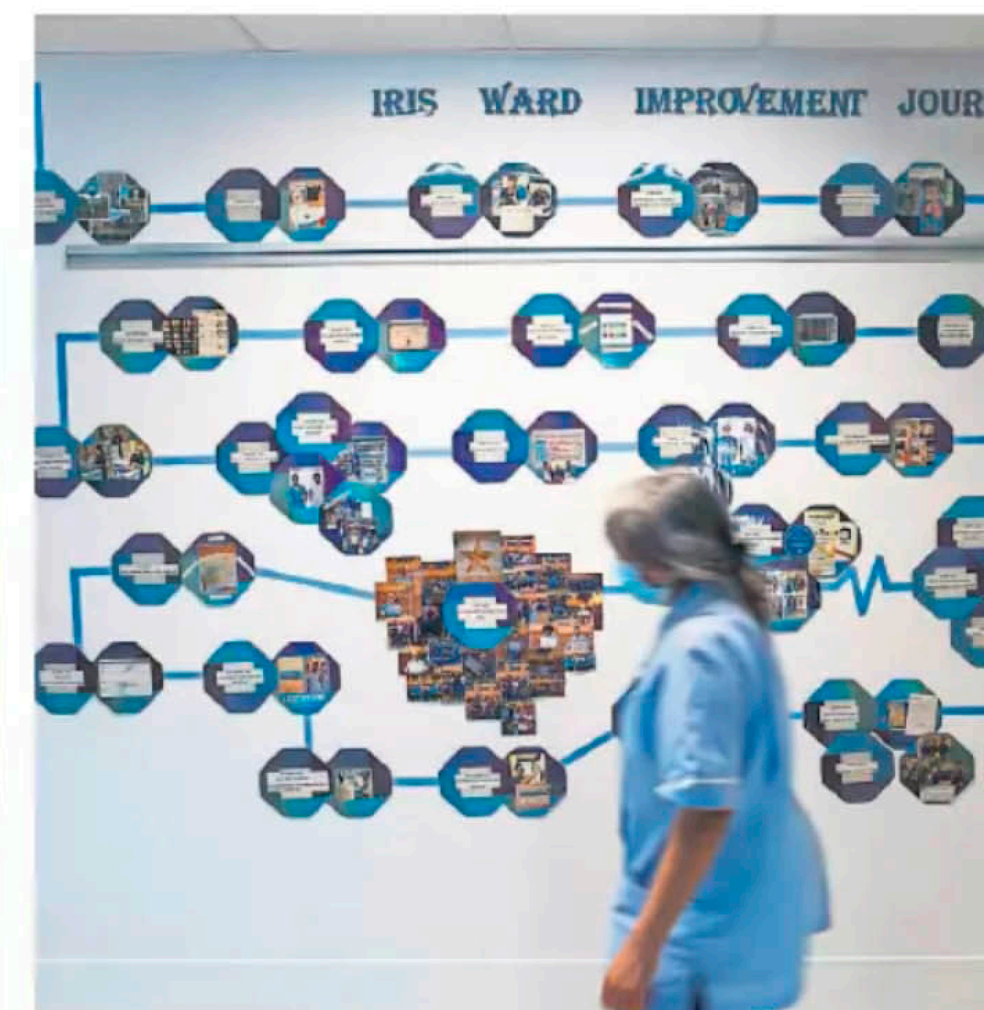
Uefa said it ran a "fair and competitive tender process" adding that some players and national kits had been missing in previous tournaments.

Panini said its England collection was "to enable fans to collect top quality stickers in 100% official kits, in a concise and completable collection".

Topps said: "While we are disappointed that a small number of players are missing, this is due to the former sticker partner having blocked certain parts of the collections."

General election 2024






*LEFT Thangadorai Amalesh, surgery director at King George hospital, says flexibility improved after the pandemic. Photographs: Andy Hall for the Observer*

*'The answer is never bureaucracy – it's to remove bottlenecks in the system'*
*Thangadorai Amalesh, director of surgery*

# Inside the hospital trialling the plan that Labour hopes will fix the NHS

As politicians clash over long queues for treatment, pioneering hospitals are already finding ways to see more patients, writes *Jon Ungoed-Thomas*



*Cancer patient John Harvey, left, discusses his treatment at the surgery hub at King George hospital, London.*

Just two weeks after he was diagnosed with cancer, John Harvey was in a hospital ward on Thursday for a three-hour operation that he hopes will cure him.

Harvey, 79, from east London, expected an anxious wait for treatment after being diagnosed with colon cancer but has benefited from a drive to cut waiting times at the trust where he is being treated. "I thought the wait would be weeks and weeks," he said. "I was surprised."

Harvey, who was in hospital for an operation to remove part of his colon, is on the frontline of a key election battleground, along with millions of others like him: the NHS waiting list.

Rishi Sunak said in January last year that he would fix the NHS, pledging that "waiting lists will fall and people will get the care they need more quickly". The waiting list is 330,000 longer than when he made his pledge.

Sunak and Labour leader Keir Starmer clashed over the NHS waiting list in the ITV general election debate on Tuesday when the prime minister claimed waiting lists were coming down. Starmer responded: "[They were] 7.2 million when you said you would get them down. They are now 7.5 million. I would like you to explain how they're coming down."

Shadow health secretary Wes Streeting says a new Labour government will create an additional 40,000 appointments, scans and operations a week in England to cut the waiting list, equivalent to more than 2m extra appointments a year. Yet one key question remains for the millions languishing on the list: will it work?

Medical teams at King George hospital, part of the Barking, Havering and Redbridge University hospitals NHS trust, where John Harvey was being treated last week, are already implementing some of the innovative measures which could finally cut the waiting lists. The hospital is in a neighbouring constituency to Streeting's, and he has highlighted their work as "genuinely groundbreaking and nationally leading".

The goal is to avoid cancellations and ensure medical resources, from operating theatres to diagnostic equipment, are used effectively. Or, as one director of surgery put it last week, "to sweat the assets". There is also more weekend working and partnerships with independent providers to ensure faster diagnosis and treatment.

Planned operations, known as elective surgery, are routinely cancelled in hospitals across the country because high-dependency beds are unavailable or surgical teams and operating theatres are needed for emergency admissions. The delays cascade down the lists.

Thangadorai Amalesh, divisional director of surgery at the Barking, Havering and Redbridge University hospitals NHS trust, said that during the pandemic the medical teams looked at the best ways to avoid cancellations. "We decided to establish what we described as a hospital within a hospital, where we protected King George hospital in our trust as an elective hub," he said.

The new dedicated hub was set up with ringfenced beds, facilities and staff. It meant patients could be admitted without worrying that their operations may be cancelled and surgeons could start operations earlier in the morning, knowing that a high-dependency bed would be available for the patient afterwards.

The clinical teams looked at various aspects of their operations, with several projects to increase productivity. It included "bones" weeks to tackle backlogs in orthopaedic patients, with theatres operating 12 hours a day over weekdays and the weekend.

"The answer is never bureaucracy but rather to focus on how you remove bottlenecks in the system," said Amalesh. "We learned a lot of lessons from the pandemic on how to be more flexible."

The standalone elective hub set up at King George hospital during the pandemic was one of the first. There are now about 100 across England, focusing mainly on high-volume, low-complexity surgery.

The King George hub was expanded with the opening of a £14m extension including two operating theatres last month. It will allow 100 additional operations a week. The trust cut the



*LEFT The hospital's clinical teams have undertaken projects to boost productivity.*

number of patients waiting more than a year from 2,430 in March 2021 to 1,783 last March, and officials say they could have got this down to zero had there been no industrial action.

Despite this success, the most recent figures show overall waiting lists at the trust are still rising over the year, highlighting the fact that inpatient operations are only a small proportion of the overall waiting list.

Matthew Trainer, the trust's chief executive, said: "This is not going to be a quick fix. It's a programme of recovery. Nine out of 10 people on the waiting list are not waiting for an inpatient surgical procedure. They are waiting for appointments and diagnostics."

Independent providers are helping to assess patients after GP referrals, and there is a drive by the trust to increase the number of clinics and tests. Trainer said further initiatives could be introduced nationally to check whether people on the waiting list needed to be on it or whether they could be treated in the community. There should be greater investment to ensure healthier lifestyles to reduce the burden on the NHS, he added.

Kathryn Marszalek, senior analytical manager at the Health Foundation, said that Labour's pledge of an additional 2m appointments a year should not be seen as a "silver bullet". "The health system is in desperate need of capital investment, and the industrial action with junior doctors needs to be solved. We can't rely exclusively on trying to increase activity with one feature such as weekend working."

Labour plans to cut waiting list times with weekend clinics, using spare capacity in the private sector and doubling the number of scanners to deliver faster diagnoses. It says its plan will cost £1.3bn, paid for by a crackdown on tax avoidance, but it is a small proportion of the annual NHS budget for England of about £165bn. So far the party has given no indication of the amount of money it is prepared to spend on fixing crumbling hospitals or increasing the workforce.

Rob Findlay, a specialist in NHS demand and capacity planning at the data management solutions firm Insource, said the NHS undertakes 92m outpatient appointments, tests and operations a year, which includes follow-up appointments.

The additional 2m appointments a year promised by Labour represents an increase in activity of only about 2%. "This extra activity will need to be targeted to bring the waiting times and the waiting list down," he said. "It will definitely make a difference, but how big a difference is the big unknown."

**ON OTHER PAGES**

**Angela unleashed: Rayner on banter with Keir, lettuce and Gove** News, pages 6–7

**Lib Dems push for tactical voting to bring down blue wall** News, page 10

**Will Espresso be the song of the summer?** Focus, p36–37

**Why is there a conspiracy of silence about Brexit?** Andrew Rawnsley, p43

# Gangbusters? UK growth is puny and due to migration, reveals new report

**Economy**
**Toby Helm**
*Political Editor*

Rishi Sunak's pre-election claim that the UK economy is now "going gangbusters" is undermined today by a report which argues that growth since 2010 has been "unspectacular" and has been the result of a rising population, caused principally by high levels of immigration.

The study, Life in the Slow Lane, from the politically independent Resolution Foundation, will add to the consensus among economists and academics that the economic challenges facing this country are being dodged by the parties during the general election campaign.

Both Labour and Tories have vowed to bring down immigration if they form the next government, while saying little on how they will increase productivity through higher investment to stimulate real, long-term growth. The report says that population growth averaged 0.7% a year in the UK since 2010, the equivalent of 6 million people, and has been the prime driver of what GDP growth that there has been. Three-quarters of this total population growth was the result of immigration.

"Looking at GDP per capita, the UK's overall and relative performance is far worse," the Foundation says. "GDP per capita has grown by a mere 4.3% over the past 16 years, compared to 46% in the years prior." The report says the growing population has masked the UK's "atrocious" record on productivity (output per worker) which grew by just 0.6% a year in the 2010s. Since the 2008 financial crisis. productivity growth has been the slowest for two centuries.



*Rishi Sunak claimed the economy was 'going gangbusters'.*

Tory peer David Willetts, president of the Resolution Foundation, said: "Our report shows that crude figures on GDP growth exaggerate our performance because the population has been going up. The growth of GDP per head is far too low. We have got to boost investment to get the economy growing and the party manifestos have to recognise how serious the problem is and show how to tackle it. The campaigns so far haven't really tackled this challenge."

Looking ahead, the report says that the employment boom of the 2010s is unlikely to be repeated. Migration levels are expected to fall, from 685,000 in 2023 to around 350,000 annually over the next five years, while an unhealthy population, and the fact that much of the UK's large baby boomer cohort will be retiring, will put further downward pressure on future growth of the workforce.

Greg Thwaites, research director at the Resolution Foundation, said: "The extra 6 million people in Britain have certainly made the economy bigger, but have done little for GDP per capita. The UK's record on productivity – which is what really matters for living standards – is exceptionally bad."

Since 2019, the UK has strengthened its position as the world's second-biggest exporter of services after the US, the report says. But "far less welcome" has been its "weak performance on goods trade" with 57% of manufacturing businesses "still wrestling with the additional paperwork, customs duties and border checks which have increased exporting challenges post-Brexit".

The Resolution Foundation report puts Sunak's claim into context: "A single quarter of growth doesn't tell the whole story, however – what matters is the big picture of how the economy has been performing since 2010, where the picture remains one of stagnation since the financial crisis. In this context what matters for household living standards is not GDP growth but growth in productivity... On this measure, the 0.4% annual growth rate in productivity since 2007 is the lowest over an equivalent period in 200 years, and this has left the average real wage £14,400 below its pre-financial crisis trend."

# 'Crank' Tory candidates accused of sharing online conspiracies

**Conservatives**
**Jon Ungoed-Thomas & Sophie Wilkinson**

The Conservative party has been accused of becoming a home for "cranks" after some of its candidates at the general election were revealed to have shared conspiracy theories on social media.

The posts seen by the *Observer* include the suggestion that positive tests for Covid-19 were "mass psychosis at work" and that the Black Lives Matter movement might be an attempt to "bring down British society".

Labour said some of the postings shared by Tory candidates suggested "serious concerns" about the calibre of the party's would-be MPs. Some candidates have already deleted social media accounts, or removed posts, or locked access to accounts.

Jenny Johnson, who is an associate professor at the University of Liverpool and the Tory candidate for Wirral West, has deleted her account on X, but archived posts reveal she shared apparent pandemic conspiracy theories.

In one post she appeared to suggest the testing regime for the pandemic might be unreliable. She wrote: "Time to stop control by outside forces. Regain our sovereign nation state. Anecdotally I know so many who supposedly have tested positive, but really just have common cold symptoms. Mass psychosis at work."

Johnson told her local paper the *Liverpool Echo* in January that she was not a conspiracy theorist, but her training as an academic made her look at "the narrative and counter narrative". She said: "I'm not endorsing anybody by the fact I'm retweeting them." Speaking to the *Observer* yesterday, she said: "I use social media to inform the local community and of course I would never seek to cause any offence."



*Tory party candidate Jenny Johnson faces scrutiny over social media posts.*

Niall Innes, who is standing in Stockton North, reposted a controversial BBC interview in June 2020 with the TV presenter Neil Oliver in which he suggested Black Lives Matter campaigners might be anarchists or communists attempting to "eat into the built fabric of Britain and thereby to bring down British society".

Oliver also said there were significant issues with modern slavery that needed to be confronted. Innes wrote: "Well said and aptly put", with an applause icon. Innes said yesterday: "I apologise if any offence was caused."

Tory party candidates in London also face scrutiny over their outspoken views.

Alex Deane, the candidate for Finchley and Golders Green, wrote a book in 2005 called *The Great Abdication* in which he said the notion "that all cultures are equally valid" has risked undermining Britain's culture. In his championing of traditional values, he wrote: "We must teach people to be prejudiced once again."

Deane said he had written the book two decades ago. He said the comment on cultures was about being robust in asserting liberal democratic values. He said the comment on prejudice was elaborating on a quote from former prime minister John Major about the benefits of a rules-based society in which "we should condemn a little more and understand a little less".

Jonathan Ashworth, shadow paymaster general, said: "Rishi Sunak's Conservative party is being increasingly taken over by cranks and conspiracy theorists. Having promised to lead a government of integrity, there are now serious concerns about the calibre of these would-be Conservative MPs."

A Tory spokesman said: "The Conservative party has spoken to these individuals and reminded them of the party's code of conduct and standards expected of candidates, including on social media."

General election 2024

# Angela unleashed: Rayner on banter with Keir, lettuce – and the chance of disco with Gove

On her 5,000-mile campaign trip on the battle bus, Labour's deputy opens up to Starmer's biographer *Tom Baldwin*

Labour's campaign bus is rolling on through the outskirts of Manchester, and Angela Rayner is pointing at me with mock outrage. "Tom! What have you done to my lettuce?" I'm not owning up and insist I never even touched it. "Well, someone has done something," she says suspiciously.

The vegetable has been decorated to make it resemble the one that infamously triumphed in the *Daily Star*'s competition to see whether it could outlast Liz Truss as prime minister. Labour's deputy leader decrees it needs "surgery" and a small operation is performed to replace a missing googly eye. Then the lettuce is put back in a fridge that itself has become an unlikely star of this election.

It all began when Rayner told Sky News of her plan for a 5,000-mile tour of Britain on her new election battle bus, before adding, with perfect deadpan comic timing: "You're gonna love it – it's got a fridge." Both fridge and lettuce have since appeared in a TikTok video filled with the kind of freewheeling spirit that's sometimes a bit absent from the more buttoned-up approach Keir Starmer has taken to this campaign.

After the bus arrives in Manchester, to be greeted by a crowd of supporters, the region's mayor, Andy Burnham, compares Rayner to John Prescott, the former deputy leader once famed for his election bus tours. The difference this time, he says, is: "Angela has the ability to connect with people without actually punching anybody."

Indeed, in Friday night's BBC TV debate, she was restrained as Tory opponent Penny Mordaunt repeatedly goaded and interrupted her. But Rayner knows part of her role in this election is to lighten up Labour and, sitting on the back row of the bus with her, the next display of down-to-earth humanity is never far away. At one point, she wrinkles her nose at some food on the table. "Is it vegan?" she asks. After being reassured it contains all kinds of animal products (that lettuce really is just for show) she bites into a pie. "Oh, look at that. Ham! A bit of real ham!"

Rayner then opens her arms wide and describes feeling "unleashed" now she's been cleared by the police of any criminal wrongdoing over the sale of her former council home in Stockport. But those weeks when she was under investigation have clearly been bruising. The controversy fuelled what sometimes seems like a prurient interest in her personal life and living arrangements that included getting pregnant with her first child before her GCSEs and then having two more with her now ex-husband.

She thinks political opponents just "want me to stay in my lane and tell me, get back in your place". She adds: "It's horrible to have people telling you that you're not all right in how you speak or conduct yourself. They try to make you feel you don't belong. I've always felt like I had to prove myself. As a young mother I got the same tone from the housing department. It's different if you have a child in your 20s but at 16, people judge you. I had to prove I could look after my child."

There was hypocrisy, she says, in the attacks on her by very wealthy men whose non-domiciled status had allowed them to avoid – legally – paying many millions of pounds more in tax than the comparatively tiny sum she was accused of dodging. "When I bought my house, I had an estate agent and a conveyancing solicitor," she points out. "That's what normal working people do. I didn't have loads of tax advisers and accountants."




*Rayner with Andy Burnham, mayor of Greater Manchester, on the campaign trail, yesterday. Paul Travis*

Does she fancy moving into another form of public housing, such as the stately home of Dorneywood, usually given to those holding the post of deputy prime minister? "I haven't even thought about that. I love my little flat in London." She's not going to make the mistake of "measuring the curtains" for power when the election is not won yet and, in any case in a place like that, "it'd be quite a lot of curtains, wouldn't it?"

Rayner is at pains to deny that the obvious contrast in style between her and Starmer represents more profound differences of the kind they had in 2021, when she found out from the media that he was trying to demote her. Indeed, the steadfast support he gave Rayner when she was under attack recently has, according to both sides, strengthened a relationship which helps keep the party's big tent upright.

"We work well together," she says, "we have each other's backs and have a bit of banter now. Sometimes he'll tell me I'm wrong on some issue and sometimes I'll tell him. When you're looking at a problem, you don't just want yes people around you. Questioning each other is good."

Even so, there have been claims in this campaign that she's undermining Starmer, first by publicly backing Diane Abbott's right to be a Labour candidate, then proclaiming she wanted multilateral disarmament on the day he was seeking to emphasise Labour's support for Britain having nuclear weapons.

"Keir and me aren't in a different place with respect to Diane," she says, before going on to describe how the Labour leader would never have authorised the anonymous briefing suggesting Abbott was banned from standing. "I kind of know how he ticks and that's not how he conducts himself. He's a stickler for following the rules." Is it true she telephoned Faiza Shaheen, another leftwinger who – unlike Abbott – has



## On the stump: Michael Savage

### Tice Reformed

Nigel Farage's latest attempt to break his general election duck – seven innings without troubling the scorers – was the week's big moment. Thoughts please for the now former Reform leader Richard Tice, who handed Farage the party reins after almost single-handedly fronting, funding and running it right up to the moment that anyone actually cared. Not since the tribulations of Wallace and Gromit has a devoted sidekick been so mistreated by a nationally renowned oddball. But Gromit had the excuse of being both a dog and a fictional character – neither of which Tice can fall back on.

### The only way is Essex

A few alarm bells ringing at CCHQ after Tory chairman Richard Holden, ostensibly in charge of the Conservative effort to get lots of people elected, secured his party's nomination in Basildon and Billericay after seeing off precisely zero other contenders. Holden previously represented the now abolished seat of North West Durham and pleaded recently that he was "bloody loyal to the north east". It turns out that by "north east", he actually meant south Essex – an easy mistake. Ideally, the ever-competitive Holden may have preferred a constituency with no opponents or indeed voters, allowing him to dispense with the inconvenient democracy thing completely.

### Taxing times

Laughs all round at the nerdy boffins at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, who have embarrassed themselves by suggesting that the parties should have an "open and robust" discussion about how they would actually pay for quaint, luxury institutions such as schools and hospitals. Have they not been keeping up with election 24? If you haven't got a made-up "tax bombshell" or a confected policy announcement with the word "lock" in it, we really don't want to know. Back to your abacuses.

*Angela Rayner: 'This is not a game for us.' Alicia Canter/ the Observer*

been blocked from standing? "I'm not going to get into what personal conversations I have," replies Rayner, suddenly stiffening.

On nuclear weapons, she expresses astonishment that anyone would think her remarks were controversial. "Margaret Thatcher was a multilateralist," says Rayner, as she insists that voting against renewing Trident eight years ago didn't make her a unilateralist. "I would sincerely hope that every leader would want a world where we didn't have these weapons, but we now live in one where there's Putin and we have to have our nuclear deterrent."

This is part of the serious side to her which is too easily ignored. For instance, it is noteworthy that someone seemingly as tribal as Rayner wants to have a meeting with Michael Gove – "old Govey" as she calls the levelling up secretary – about housing policy now that he has announced that he is to quit frontline politics.

"I actually respect him in some ways. He identified some of the problems and solutions. He wanted to do some things on planning reform, but the Tory MPs stopped him."

Then she breaks into a smile again as she adds: "Both me and Michael like a disco, don't we? He could pay the fiver for me to get in and we could have a disco together afterwards."

In government, there will be less room for jokes and dancing. "If we win on July the fourth, the real work begins on July the fifth. I've got no holiday booked for the summer. The opportunity to make change could come and go quickly. Keir won't have us around the table if we're not up for it."

She points out that this is the most working-class shadow cabinet in a generation. It's not just her and Starmer, but also people such as Bridget Phillipson, who was brought up on benefits by a single mother and is "passionate about education" because "she knows what it did for her".

Rayner then pauses and looks straight ahead as she adds: "It makes us feel this real sense of responsibility. This is not a game for us."

**Bad press**

Congrats to Liz Truss, who is smashing it on the campaign trail – the "it" in question being the Tory party's plea that she go quietly. Whatever her team hoped the headline might be after her local newspaper interview, we can infer that "Truss: 'I'm not worst PM ever'" wasn't in their top five outcomes. In hindsight, perhaps such an intriguing election strategy might have worked for other politicians recovering from a political implosion. If only former Labour MP Keith Vaz had thought to sit down with his local paper and declare: "It was just the once that I implied to those Romanian male escorts that I was a washing machine salesman who could purchase drugs." You live, you learn.



*LEFT 'Queen Victoria and Prince Albert' form part of the Aldershot parade. Karen Robinson/ the Observer*

# 'Walking out to do an interview! I think he's walked out of No 10'

**D-day row**

**James Tapper**

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert idle past in a vintage car, followed by a samba band, a Keralan dance troupe and army cadets on the march, watched intently by Gurkha veterans with ribboned chests.

It's Aldershot's Victoria Day parade, an annual celebration of the Hampshire town's links to Queen Victoria, who established it as the home of the British army in the 1850s. Aldershot Garrison is nearby and plenty of people here have strong military connections.

"We do Armed Forces Day too," says Tonia Page. "Any remembrance days everyone comes out – it's so nice because you see all the old men in their berets. Everyone's here."

Standing outside Princes Hall, at the start of the parade, the 53-year-old is one of many in Aldershot with strong views on Rishi Sunak's decision to leave the D-day commemorations early.

"I am ashamed of the Conservative party," Page says. "I never voted until the last two local elections and now I am a proud Labour supporter, especially after what Rishi Sunak did at the D-day parade.

"The reason the D-day thing hits so hard is because my son is ex-military," she adds. "Everything the Conservatives have touched is turning to rubbish."

Aldershot has always been a Conservative constituency since it was created in 1918 and the seat is being defended by Leo Docherty, who won with a majority of more than 16,000 in 2019.

It's not a place that would ordinarily catch much attention during a general election, but Labour won a narrow majority on Rushmoor borough council in the May local elections, and polling suggests that, nationally, Labour's candidate, Alex Baker, is neck and neck. It's a measure of how seriously Labour HQ is taking the prospects of winning here that Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, paid a visit to the candidate alongside Mary Portas yesterday.

"People are struggling," Page says. "People are lining up at food banks and I think they deserve better. I've looked at Keir Starmer's policies – he may be a bit wishy-washy but his policies are more about helping working-class people."

She is also upset at how people with mental health problems are "being stigmatised" by Sunak's crackdown on what he called Britain's sicknote culture. "It's disgusting."

Jeet Menyangbo is persuaded to tear his attention from some Chinese lions dancing towards the town centre. The 52-year-old is the son of a Gurkha and has voted Conservative and Labour in the past.

> *'I'm ashamed of the Conservative party. It hits so hard because my son is ex-military'*
> *Tonia Page*



*Jeet Menyangbo, son of a Gurkha, is not happy with the Conservatives.*

"I'm not happy with the Conservatives, so maybe this time I will vote Labour," he says. "[The Conservatives] have run the country for the last 14 years and the economy, socially, welfare – these things are not very good. The Nepalese community is struggling to pay their mortgages because of interest rates."

Another Labour voter is Robert Crockford, waiting with his dogs Spike and Flicker. "I just want the country to do better," he says.

Voices such as these give Baker hope. The Labour candidate said she was getting a good reception in the military areas. "These are places we wouldn't traditionally expect to get a good reception but we are having some really interesting conversations with military families," she said. "There's a feeling here that for the last 14 years they've lacked a champion who will stand up for local issues."

Aldershot and Farnborough have one of England's most pronounced shortages of school places, while the worn-out town centre and military accommodation are other important local issues.

Not everyone is keen on Labour, but hardly anyone who stops to talk is prepared to back the Conservatives. Helen Owen is a 39-year-old communications executive whose husband is in the military. She doesn't yet know who she'll vote for but was unimpressed with both Penny Mordaunt and Angela Rayner during the BBC debate last week. "I don't think any party is putting their policies very well, and Rishi Sunak's walk-out of the D-day celebrations hasn't done him any favours.

"It's really disappointing. He must have had bad advisers. He did the best anyone could do during Covid – he did a wonderful job, and I thought he would be a great PM. So to do something like that, to walk out of D-day to do an interview – I think he's walked out of No 10 by doing that."

Tom Langley, a plumbing, heating and gas engineer in his 30s, says he doesn't feel as though his career is progressing. "I had all the confidence in the Tories," he says. "But they lost me during Covid." As a self-employed worker, he got no help with furlough. "Labour will run the country into the ground – what we need is a little bit of Reform."

Only 88-year-old Mick Betts, here to support Help for Heroes, is a confirmed Conservative voter. "I will never forgive Tony Blair," he says. "I lost a lot of people in Iraq."

General election 2024

# In the seat where he exposed Brexit faultlines, Farage is talk of the town



RIGHT Miguel Buron is in Clacton to find work. Sophia Evans/ the Observer

It's 10 years since Ukip took Clacton – helped by the man who now leads Reform. What do voters think of him today, asks *Tim Adams*






On the seafront at Clacton there is a variety of nostalgias to choose from. The advertising boards for the Princes theatre offer tickets to "80s Live" while the West Cliff promotes "Sounds of the Sixties". Tickets for the present and the future do not seem so readily available.

On Thursday morning, a different kind of history lesson was about to begin. In the memorial garden behind the revamped pier (address: "No 1, North Sea") the D-day commemoration service was scheduled for 11am. Two dozen veterans from different conflicts assembled to say a prayer for the fallen; the solemn two minutes' silence was punctuated by the cry of gulls and the whining of power tools from nightclub renovations across the road.

Afterwards, the talk among the old soldiers was of the coming battle for these particular beaches. Nigel Farage was not in attendance here – he was taking the opportunity to pose in military vehicles in Normandy. But last Tuesday he had staged his own familiar end-of-the-pier show. That announcement of his candidacy ended with the suitable slapstick of a milkshake chucked by a woman who the BBC identified "as a fan of Jeremy Corbyn and an OnlyFans model". A couple of days on, in Clacton, the reviews were still coming in.

In a straw poll of veterans, Farage's campaign message seemed to be getting through. Jason Stewart was in a green beret and a biker jacket studded with medals; after a long career in the Marines, he "thought it was time to get out after I was blown up twice in one day in Afghanistan". He offers a version of an argument heard all day. "The two main parties look both the same to me," he says. "The Tories don't care about us. And Labour say they will reopen prosecutions of soldiers who served [in the Troubles] so that's a no-no. Farage and Reform seem like the only option."

Up the road, meanwhile, opposite McDonald's, there was an alternative display of army jeeps and vehicles alongside veterans in fatigues. The display was organised by David Bye and his partner, Linda Hazelton, who run a charity delivering homemade pie and mash to needy veterans around the town. Bye had a one-to-one chat with Farage when he visited and claims he was given certain commitments, which will remain between them. He grew up here; he remembers earning pocket money as a kid running tourist luggage down busy streets to Butlin's. It's been a long decline, he says, since the holiday camp went. "I thought I'd seen it all," he says. "But the other morning I saw a long queue of blokes on bikes waiting for McDonald's to open. They were collecting takeaways for people who couldn't be bothered to make breakfast for their kids.

"I don't know where you start with some of that," he suggests. "But I think Nigel gets it."

Just along the coast from the centre of town – beyond the site once occupied by Butlin's, now marked by a heritage plaque – is Jaywick, a collection of ad hoc 1930s chalets, now permanent homes, that has been widely identified as the poorest council ward in Britain. The second part of Farage's campaign launch took place here, at the Three Jays pub.

The place holds symbolic relevance to Farage. Exactly a decade ago, under his Ukip brand, a meeting here paved the way for that party's only Westminster election success, for Douglas Carswell. If you were to define the moment that Brexit became a possibility, and then a reality, you might begin there. Nine hundred people showed up, many of whom had not previously taken any interest in national politics. In the course of their populist pitch, Carswell and Farage quoted liberally from a *Times* newspaper column the previous week written by Matthew Parris.

Looking back at that column a decade on, you can see in it all the faultlines that were exposed and exploited so cynically by Farage and Brexit, the roots of the crisis that threatens to destroy the Conservative party in this election (a humiliation from which Farage, inevitably, hopes to benefit).

Parris, in his waspish style, on a visit to Clacton in 2014, had declared its irrelevance to modern Conservatism: "This is tracksuit-and-trainers Britain, tattoo-parlour Britain, *All-Our-Yesterdays* Britain," he wrote. He asked his party a question which would now get a very different answer: "Is this where the Conservative party wants to be? [Or] do we need to be with the Britain that can admire immigrants and want them with us, that doesn't want to spend its days buying scratchcards?"

Parris insisted he was not "arguing that we should be careless of the needs of struggling people and places such as Clacton. But I am arguing – if I am honest – that we should be careless of their opinions."

*If you were to define the moment that Brexit became a possibility, and then a reality, you might begin here*

If the following couple of years proved anything to the Tory party, it was that the people Parris caricatured were not prepared to be abandoned in that way, and that collectively – at least in the EU referendum – they had a voice. Clacton produced the second-largest majority for Brexit, and that vote was directed as surely against that metropolitan arrogance as towards Brussels.

A decade on, despite everything, many people here still seem prepared to listen to Farage, because for all the government promises of levelling up, their lives have only got harder. And of course Farage, ever the chancer, has seamlessly replaced one imaginary scapegoat for all those issues – EU bureaucracy – with another: desperate asylum seekers on small boats. Clacton has a population that identifies as 96% white British. But still, talk to many people here about politics and mass immigration is the issue that frequently comes up.

After Carswell's election, Jaywick attracted a grim kind of poverty tourism; the Channel 5 series *Benefits by the Sea* sought out extremes of deprivation. That exposure strengthened a kind of off-grid defensiveness in the community here, though. The next time a documentary crew came – led by media personality Jodie Marsh – she was pelted with eggs and run out of town.

Barry and Suzy Shimell featured in that Channel 5 programme and were disgusted by the way it was edited. This morning they have set up a little stall selling bric-a-brac for charity outside their house, which fronts the beach. They used to own hotels in town and love it here, though the community is not quite what it was since the pandemic. But the problems, they suggest, come from outside rather than within. There is talk of a dinghy that washed up here on the beach a while back – empty of people but full of clothes and bits and pieces. "We knew exactly what that was," Suzy says. Don't get them wrong, they say – they'd help anyone. But they like the idea of Farage telling it like it is.

Scratch the surface and you hear




ABOVE
*Farage poses with a milkshake like the one that was thrown at him during the campaign launch by a protester.* Carl Court/ Getty



LEFT
*Nigel Farage launching his campaign last week at Clacton pier; he staged the second part of the event in deprived Jaywick.* Tolga Akmen/AP

FAR LEFT
*Holidaymakers Marlene Fox and Christine Beiley: 'We've got to start looking after our own people.'* Sophia Evans/ the Observer

something of the same story from different quarters. In recent years, partly shamed by the coverage of Jaywick, the local Tendring council has come up with a plan to develop the area. Investment worth £120m has been mentioned. The first evidence of this is Sunspot, a market hall and shared workspace that won a recent design award and is something concrete in a place that seems alarmingly precarious and temporary.

In the cafe, Marlene Fox and Christine Beiley, on holiday with their mum, can't get over how much it has improved since they lived here. "Ten years ago, you wouldn't have left your car here. You'd walk round the corner and when you came back all that would be left is the steering wheel, if you were lucky." They are, nevertheless, still gutted to have missed Farage on the pier. "We've got to start looking after our own people," Beiley says, repeating another mantra.

And then, of course, you find anomalies. Barry Dawson, 75, is walking his neighbour's chihuahuas. An "old hippy", he moved "to the badlands" here from the East End of London, 30 years ago, did a sociology degree, brought up kids and grandkids, worked in children's homes, never looked back. He is cheerfully scathing of the "Romford talk" of some of his friends and neighbours, and he has no truck with Farage. "I'm an old union man," he says. "Corbyn wasn't left enough for me. Farage has got nothing at all to say to people here – but I'm not sure Starmer has either."

What Farage can rely on is recognition. Miguel Buron, 31, who is riding a fat-wheeled electric bike up and down the boardwalk, moved to Jaywick not long ago and is looking for a job. He looks blank when I mention Brexit, as if hearing the word for the first time, but he knows Farage well enough. "He was here," he says. "He seems like a good thing."

It's an enthusiasm shared in other unlikely places. The most deprived quarter of Jaywick is Brooklands. Wander along those part-derelict streets, though, and you come across an isolated little oasis of a shop, the Little Curiosity Spot, run by a Brazilian expat, Ieda Lima-Boswell, and her husband, John. Lima-Boswell hand-paints designs on vintage clothing and sells arts and crafts made by local residents. She and her husband moved here from Biarritz in France three years ago, because they wanted a bit more of an adventure in their retirement.

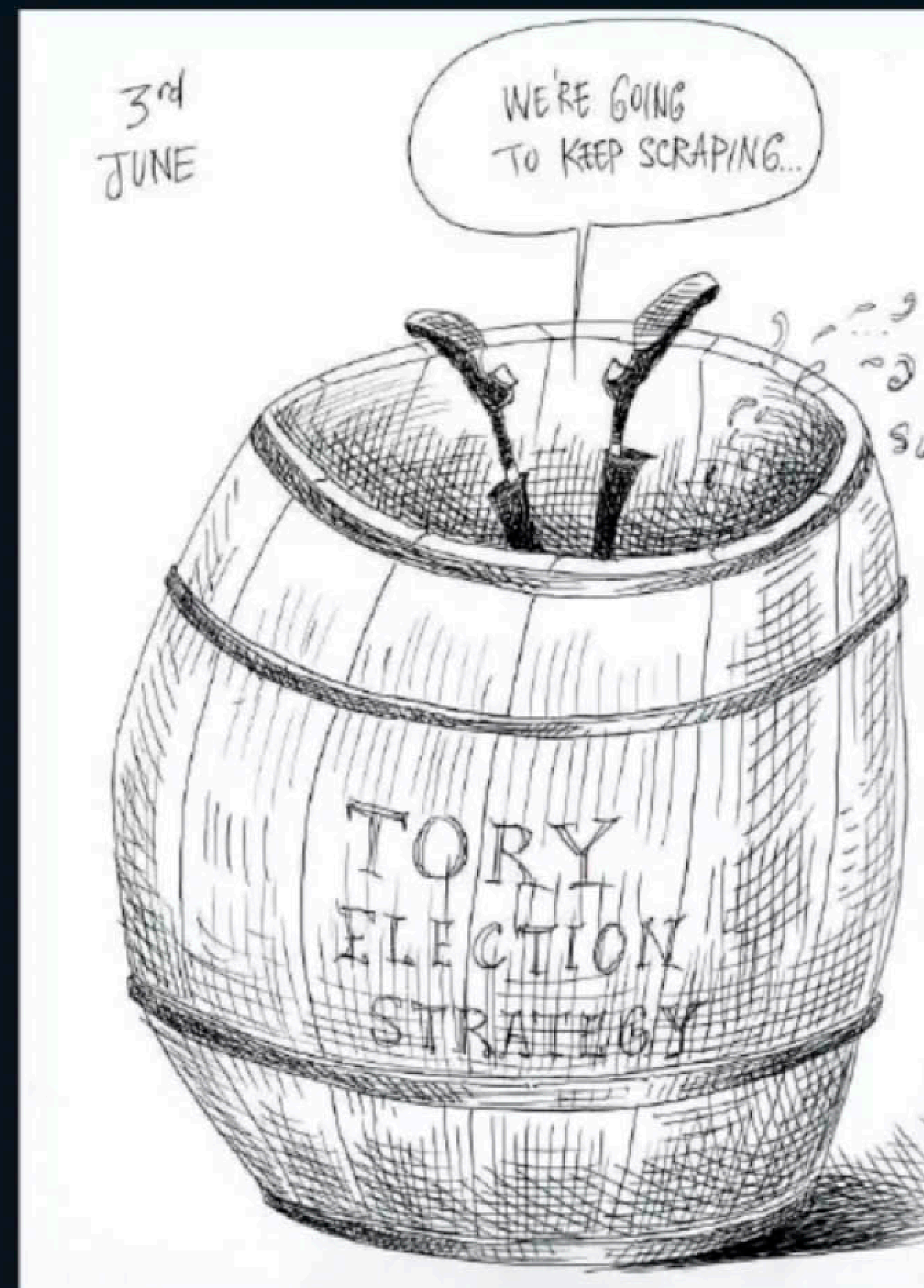
Boswell-Lima talks of the warm welcome they have received, and the creative spirits she is trying to ignite locally. Surely she isn't taken in by Farage? She points to a Reform poster proudly displayed above the desk where she paints. "I'm so sad I missed him the other day!"

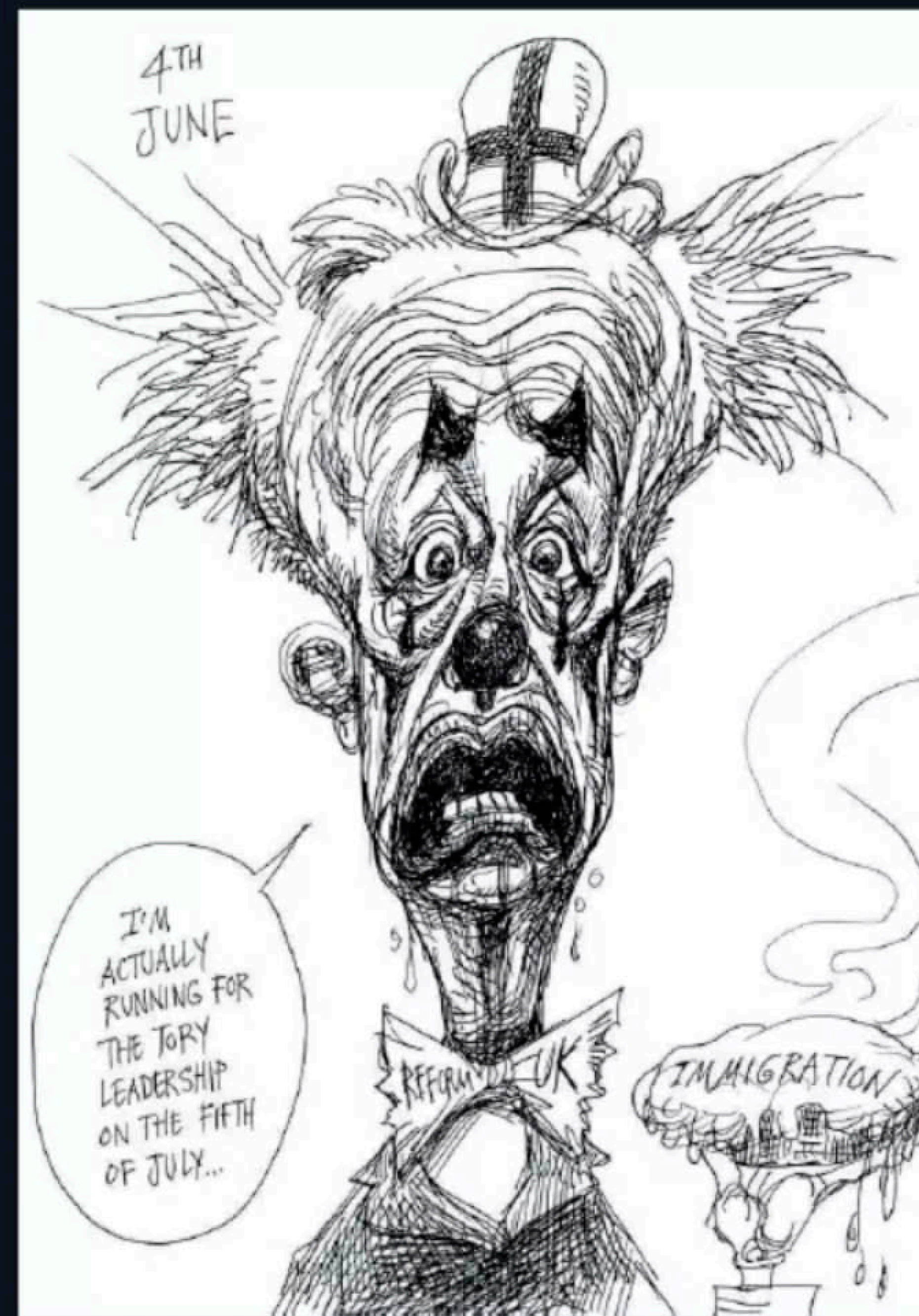
The people I speak to have less to say about Labour's candidate, Jovan Owusu-Nepaul, fresh from a Cambridge politics degree, and Giles Watling, the Tory (who played the vicar in *Bread*), defending a thumping, but now precarious, majority.

Some of the social problems are so intractable here you suspect many concur deep down with the heckler at the Wetherspoon's pub on Tuesday, who – when Farage paused to ask "What do I have to offer Clacton?" – shouted "Fuck all!" Still, as the theatre posters suggest, in the absence of a clear future, the attractions of historical re-enactment are seductive.

In this regard, of course, Farage could not have scripted a better scene for himself than the spectacle of a Tory prime minister leaving the D-day celebrations early. Tragically, as this week is proving, the forces that made his bleak and divisive message relevant in 2014 have not gone away, and in the weeks to come you suspect that Westminster political parties will still ignore Clacton at their peril.

## Riddell's week







# Labour pledges rape courts in bid to drive down backlog

» *Continued from page 1*

be "ambitious, with a clear plan to change the country for the better".

Rishi Sunak – under intense pressure to revive Tory morale and turn the polls after another disastrous few days – will also reveal the Conservative manifesto this week. It will prioritise tax cuts, including a promise to abolish stamp duty permanently for first-time buyers on the first £425,000 of a property's value.

The latest Opinium poll for the *Observer* shows Labour's lead at 18 points, down two from a week ago. Labour is on 42% (-3), the Tories 24% (-1), Reform on 12% (+1) following the decision by Nigel Farage to stand and lead the party, the Liberal Democrats 10% (+2) and the Greens 7% (+1). Most of the fieldwork was conducted before news broke late on Thursday that Sunak had left D-day commemorations in France early – a blunder for which he had to apologise amid fury from his MPs and party activists.

Opinium found that Labour now has commanding leads on all main policy areas, including those where it has not traditionally been strong, such as crime and the economy. When voters were asked who would run the economy better, Labour has a 10-point lead and on crime it is 12 points ahead.

Yesterday, after two of his cabinet ministers, Penny Mordaunt and Mark Harper, had criticised the prime minister for leaving the D-day events before they ended, an apparently rattled Sunak cancelled plans to take questions from the media during a visit to Bishop Auckland, in County Durham.

Speaking about her party's plans to halve violence against women and children and tackle the courts backlog, shadow justice secretary Shabana Mahmood said: "It is a stain on this government's record that the victims of rape are waiting so long to see justice done. Thanks to 14 years of Tory chaos, we are seeing unacceptable delays in the courts and 60% of rape victims are dropping out. For too many, justice delayed has become justice denied.

"A Labour government will work tirelessly to change this. We will halve violence against women and girls within a decade. Under our plans, we will provide free legal advocates for rape victims to ensure that victims' rights are respected. And we will introduce specialist rape courts and fast-track rape cases to ensure justice is swiftly and surely done."

Last month, the National Audit Office said it no longer believed that the Ministry of Justice's ambition to reduce the overall backlog of cases to 53,000 by March 2025 was achievable. Of the 67,573 cases awaiting trial, almost a fifth (18%) are sexual offences.

General election 2024

# Lib Dems push for tactical voting to bring the blue wall tumbling down

Many polling experts believe we could be in for a repeat of 1997, a result created in part by targeted campaigning. In Hertfordshire, *Michael Savage* sees how it works on the ground





*ABOVE Liberal Democrat candidate Victoria Collins, centre, out campaigning in Berkhamsted. Left, Labour's Andrew Lewin in Welwyn Garden City. Andy Hall/ the Observer*

On a sunny afternoon in the picturesque Hertfordshire town of Berkhamsted, recent graduate Sadie Bond is making an unusual apology to the local Lib Dem candidate, Victoria Collins. Bond says she is going to vote for Collins next month, but feels compelled to disclose her motivation. "It's tactical, I'm afraid," she says. "I've only ever really known a Tory government and I'm very much fed up with it. Everything feels a bit hopeless. I want Labour to come into power, but I know that isn't going to happen in this constituency, so I'm voting Lib Dem."

Far from being offended, the confession is music to the ears of Collins, who has been working to convince voters that she and the Lib Dems are the best vehicle for anyone simply wanting to stop the Tories here. While Harpenden and Berkhamsted is a new seat, it would be a solid brick in the Conservative blue wall in more normal political times. What makes the Lib Dem task here more intriguing is that this seat is sandwiched between two Labour targets – Hemel Hempstead and Welwyn and Hatfield. In the latter, Keir Starmer's party hopes to fell cabinet minister Grant Shapps.

As a result, this corner of the county has become a testing ground for a tactical voting drive that could help turn a bad result for the Tories into an outright disaster. To pull it off, Lib Dems want voters in Wheathampstead to be clued up enough to back them, while anyone wanting to register an anti-Conservative vote a short amble away in Lemsford will have to know Labour is the best bet.

Alarmingly for Conservative HQ, many polling experts believe the conditions are ripe for a repeat of 1997, when tactical voting benefited Labour and the Lib Dems, and cost the Tories dozens of seats, most notably toppling Michael Portillo in Enfield Southgate. This time, Shapps is among the big beasts who could suffer their own polling night infamy.

Tactical efforts came to little at the last election. Hopes among pro-Remain campaigners of an anti-Brexit tactical vote were dashed as Boris Johnson won an 80-strong majority. But conditions have changed. Peter Kellner, the veteran pollster, wrote in the *Observer* before the 1997 election that while he detected little "positive enthusiasm" for Labour, an electorate with "a burning desire to end 18 years of Tory rule" made for receptive tactical voting conditions. He believes similar ingredients are present today.

"In 1997 the leaders of the two parties were Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown," he said. "Labour voters were quite happy about Ashdown and Lib Dems quite happy about Blair. There was little impediment to most of them switching to whichever anti-Conservative candidate was best placed. Whereas in 2019, nobody knew who Jo Swinson was, and everybody knew who Jeremy Corbyn was, and that he wasn't that popular."

Collins says the Lib Dems are engaging in a concentrated exercise in Harpenden and Berkhamsted. "We've built a big team, which is getting out leaflets, knocking on doors, sharing that message that we're the ones to beat the Conservatives," she says. "Local elections that we've had in the last 18 months have been pivotal in really building that."

> *'In 1997 Labour voters were quite happy about Ashdown and Lib Dems about Blair'*
> *Peter Kellner, pollster*

There is a decent smattering of Lib Dem boards up in gardens, but they disappear on the outskirts of Welwyn. The party is pretty open about not bothering in the neighbouring seats where Labour is fighting hard. As Collins points out to some Labour-inclined voters, Labour appears to have quietly retreated on her patch. Indeed, anyone who types a Berkhamsted or Harpenden postcode into Labour's volunteering website is directed to Hemel Hempstead or Welwyn and Hatfield. It's not so much a secret pact as an open call for activists on both sides to deploy their common sense.

Andrew Lewin, the polished Labour candidate taking on Shapps, is clear that "absolutely, it is the message" that those thinking of backing another opposition party may damage the effort to remove the Conservatives. "We know every vote in this seat will count," he says. "There is no sign of activity from the Lib Dems or the Greens. I think the message is getting through that this is a Labour and Conservative marginal seat. We'll fight for every vote for the next four weeks, we'll keep hammering that home."

Anyone who has lived through a general election will be used to Lib Dem tactics. Collins' leaflets have the obligatory bar chart stating "Labour won't win here". But what is intriguing over the border in Welwyn and Hatfield is that Lewin and his team have deployed the tactic, too. Their own bar chart declares the Lib Dems "can't win here", adding: "Don't risk it and wake up to five more years of a Conservative government."

What could it mean in practice? While the net effects of tactical voting are hard to calculate, the Lib Dems could gain 10 to 20 extra seats through anti-Tory tactical voting, according to an analysis by the Electoral Calculus consultancy. Meanwhile, with the added help of Nigel Farage and Reform UK, the tactical dynamic could push Labour closer in another swathe of previously safe Tory seats.

It's not all plain sailing, though. It relies on a lot of shoe leather from campaigners. Internally, Lib Dems are concerned that the tactical voting message isn't reaching the under-35s to the same degree – a reason why this week they will target them with social media and leaflets about a commitment to expand the youth mobility scheme, making it easier for young Britons to live, study and work in the EU.

And there are still voters devoted to their party of choice. Back in Berkhamsted, Collins meets Kevin Dunford, 67, a semi-retired musician, who understood the tactical argument but still needed "more convincing" to back the Lib Dems. "There is a chance, but it would be holding my nose," he says.

And of course, the Conservatives are still fighting. David Gauke, the former Conservative cabinet minister whose old seat included Berkhamsted, said that while tactical voting had potential in the new constituency, some polls still suggested Labour could perform strongly – while the Conservatives had appointed an attractive candidate in liberal Tory Nigel Gardner. Meanwhile, there is another surprising pressure Gauke believes could come into play in these knife-edge seats – namely, fears among reluctant Tory voters about the consequences of a Conservative wipeout.

"The Liberal Democrats are seen as being sort of almost a proxy vote for Labour and that's clearly going to help them and they claim they are making advances in the blue wall," he said. "But I just wonder whether some quite centrist-minded Conservatives might conclude that voting for a moderate Conservative, who isn't going to be wanting to hand the party over to Nigel Farage, actually might be a sensible thing to do."


Palmer penalty seals his spot for E
The Daily Teleg
I'm back to lead the
Sunak pledges foreign work

*The return of Nigel Farage and Rishi Sunak's D-day disaster made headlines.*

*BELOW Former Sunday Times editor Andrew Neil.*

## Heads urge Labour to end teacher exodus to save schools

**Education**
**Anna Fazackerley**


...raph
...e revolt

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DON'T WASTE A MOMENT! Rob Burrow's final poignant message of hope
...SIVE INTERVIEW: PRIME MINISTER RISHI SUNAK
...TE FOR FARAGE ...MORE LIKELY ...END UP WITH ...RMER IN NO10'

Daily Mail
I believe death is not the end. That's the only explanation for so many things I've seen
NADINE DORRIES
DOUBLE BLOW FOR SUNAK
RISHI'S DARKEST HOUR...
4PM: Farage stuns No10 by revealing that he WILL lead Reform and stand as an MP
5PM: Bombshell poll shows Labour heading for biggest election victory in its history
So much for a slimmed down monarchy!

THE Sun
PHOTO FINISH
TENNIS HERO
If Kinnock wins today will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights

ABOVE
*The Sun's infamous and supposedly decisive intervention in the 1992 election.*

# Elections used to be so simple for Fleet Street. Not this time...

**The press**

**Vanessa Thorpe**
*Arts and Media Correspondent*

As circulations fade and alternative sources of news and commentary spread across the media universe, the impact of Conservative-aligned national newspapers on elections is declining. Gone are the days when the combined might of the *Sun*'s front page and the leader columns of the *Times*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* could claim to sway floating voters, such as the stereotyped Mondeo Man or Worcester Woman, to put an X by the name of a Tory candidate. But if these once-mighty titles have lost some of their power, they remain highly influential. So while they may not directly persuade a newly minted "Whitby woman" how to vote on 4 July, they still shape arguments inside Westminster and among the membership of the political parties.

Veteran political journalist Andrew Neil, now back inside the *Times* stable, has admitted that newspapers' collective influence "is nothing like it used to be". Speaking last week, he cited the damage once done to Labour by the "red tops", with *Sun* headlines such as the famous 1992 screamer, "If Kinnock wins today will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights", and suggested that the digital pages, newsletters and podcasts put out by leading Tory titles have nothing like the same visceral impact. But Neil also argues that British newspapers retain greater muscle than those in the US and other European countries, where he said there are no truly nationwide news publications.

In July the Tory press faces a dilemma, with higher stakes than usual. The future of the Conservative party arguably lies in its hands. The editors of the *Times*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Sun*, together with the *Spectator* magazine, must judge readers' instincts and choose what weight to give the challenge of Nigel Farage and Reform, never mind responding to the moderate tone of Keir Starmer's Labour party. The *Daily Mail*, like the *Daily Telegraph*, has already backed Rishi Sunak, but it has also given shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves unprecedented space to lay out her plans. "I'll never play fast and loose with your money," she told readers in May. Last week, most Tory titles also gave front-page coverage to the announcement that Farage would stand for parliament. "Farage remains an electrifying figure," *Spectator* editor Fraser Nelson told the *Observer*. "No paper has ever backed him, but look at his impact on the agenda." The job of journalists, Nelson added, is to scrutinise even those they support. So any criticism he makes of Sunak's government should not be read as a change of allegiance. Nelson is also sceptical about the idea that the press can alter the outcome of an election. "The power of a newspaper to influence the public is vastly exaggerated," he said. "At best we can hold a mirror up to public opinion."

Rupert Murdoch, 93, is still thought likely to influence who his British newspapers, the *Times*, the *Sunday Times* and the *Sun*, will back, although he stepped down from the top of News Corp in favour of his son Lachlan last year. On Thursday, however, journalist Dan Wootton caused a stir when he posted on X suggesting that his former paper the *Sun* was "considering endorsing no party" this time. He claimed that the deputy editor, James Slack, was "pushing for the Tories" while editor Victoria Newton's heart was "with Labour". According to Wootton, no choice was made by Lachlan Murdoch at an executive meeting last week. In Wootton's analysis, the paper ought to back Reform, to reject the failed aims of Brexit and the "wokery" of Labour. Certainly, the red top's distaste for Starmer, who sanctioned court cases against tabloid journalists accused of hacking as director of public prosecutions, may have been watered down by Labour's moves to back away from plans for new press controls. The party supported the government's media bill, including the repeal of a measure to force more newspapers to pay the legal costs of those who sue them.

> *'Farage remains an electrifying figure. No paper has ever backed him, but look at his impact'*
> **Fraser Nelson, Spectator**

Wholehearted support of Sunak is proving tricky, with the prime minister's claims last week that Labour would increase tax by £2,000 disappearing over the horizon almost as quickly as he did from Thursday's D-day commemorations. While every other national newspaper led their front pages yesterday with the fallout from Sunak's D-day debacle, the *Mail* and *Telegraph* went elsewhere for their splashes – to the search for TV doctor Michael Mosley, and the planned Tory policy to axe stamp duty for first-time house buyers. As one former high-ranking newspaper executive said this weekend: "Why would these newspapers want to link their brand to one as unpopular as the current Conservative party?"

If fewer people now buy print newspapers, many still receive their journalism via social media, so competing party attitudes to issues such as tax still penetrate the voting population, just as algorithms ensure those who already care about immigration are updated on rival policies.

So far the *Telegraph*'s tactic appears to be to "let many flowers bloom", in the assessment of Jane Martinson, author of *You May Never See Us Again*, about the recent owners of the title, the Barclay brothers. Columnists are able to criticise Sunak and salute Reform to appease readers disappointed by the endorsement of the Tory leadership. With no current clear ownership of a media group that includes the *Spectator*, its senior editors have more freedom. Consequently, the paper has launched a podcast it hopes will appeal to younger audiences. Called *The Daily T*, it is hosted by rightwinger Camilla Tominey and Kamal Ahmed, a former news executive at the BBC and the *Observer*.

While the course struck by the *Telegraph* may look unsteady, Martinson thinks it has a crucial role: "Its function now is not necessarily helping to determine the outcome of the election, but deciding on the future leadership of the Conservative party."

Headteachers have warned that stemming the "disastrous" flood of teachers leaving the profession should be as much of a priority for Labour as its plan to recruit thousands of new ones.

New government data showed that for the first time last year nearly as many teachers left the profession in England as entered it. According to the school workforce census, 44,002 teachers joined in the year to November 2023, but 43,522 teachers left.

Daniel Kebede, general secretary of the National Education Union, said the "disastrous" figures were a "shocking indictment of this government's record".

As one of its six election commitments, Labour has promised to recruit 6,500 more teachers, funded by increasing taxes on private schools. Kebede said that while teachers welcomed this commitment, it equated to just one new teacher for every four schools, meaning the sector would still be tens of thousands of teachers short of what it needed.

He called on Labour to establish an independent commission on the recruitment and retention of teachers if it won the election, saying: "When we have the largest class sizes in Europe and we are losing this many teachers we urgently need a new direction of travel."

Schools have been reporting a severe shortage of maths and science teachers for many years – with job adverts commonly receiving no suitable applicants – but the crisis has now extended to previously buoyant subjects including English. Schools say subject specialists are leaving for less stressful or better-paid sectors and not being replaced.

Will Teece, headteacher of Brookvale Groby Learning Campus, a secondary academy in Leicester, said: "The government has buried its head in the sand for so long that I worry it's almost too late to resolve it."

His school has re-advertised some teaching posts four or five times and still not found anyone to interview.

Urging Labour to focus on how to keep teachers as well as hire them, Teece said they frequently left schools because they had so much work that their home lives were suffering. "They are looking after other people's children and not spending any time with their own," he said.

Jonny Uttley, chief executive of the Education Alliance, which runs 11 schools in Hull and East Yorkshire, said: "Year after year the crisis in hiring and keeping teachers has been getting worse."

He said Labour could make some changes without big funding commitments. "Simply having a government that wants to talk up the teaching profession, after so many years of ministers talking it down, would make a huge difference to morale," he said.

Research has consistently shown that the biggest issue driving teachers to leave is workload. Uttley argued that one of the best and cheapest ways of tackling this would be to change the accountability regime, under which schools are constantly afraid of high-stakes Ofsted inspections, and are pitted against each other in the government's Progress 8 performance measures. The government has stuck by Ofsted's use of single-word judgments, despite a campaign to change it.



*LEFT* *Firefighters search the mountain paths of Symi.*

*BELOW* *The rocky shoreline of Pedi. Maria Panorma Kontou/Getty*



# 'We will not lose hope': Greek island search for Michael Mosley goes on

CCTV footage emerges of missing British TV doctor as rescue bid intensifies and temperatures increase

**Helena Smith** *Athens*
**Clea Skopeliti**

The wife of the British TV doctor Michael Mosley, who has gone missing on the Greek island of Symi, said her family "will not lose hope" as the search continues.

Mosley, known for appearing on *The One Show* and *This Morning*, disappeared during a walk in the north-east of the island on Wednesday. His wife, Dr Clare Bailey, said yesterday: "It has been three days since Michael left the beach to go for a walk. The longest and most unbearable days for myself and my children. We are so grateful to the people of Symi, the Greek authorities and the British consulate. We will not lose hope."

New CCTV footage shared of Mosley appears to show the 67-year-old walking under an umbrella in Pedi towards a path that traverses rocky hills. The video is believed to be one of the last two CCTV sightings before he left Pedi, where he had walked after leaving his wife at a beach at about 1.30pm.

By yesterday, Mosley's four children had arrived on the island hoping to find their father, a health expert who advocated the 5:2 diet.

Previous search efforts focused on the cliff trail Mosley took to Pedi from the beach of St Nikolas, which he had travelled to by boat with his wife and the friends they were staying with.

For reasons that remain unclear, Mosley said he preferred to return home on foot to Symi's main town, where he had left his mobile phone. A picture taken moments before his ascent to the path shows him in a blue cap, sunglasses, T-shirt and shorts.

"Tomorrow, rescuers will turn their attention to caves in the area of Noulia," deputy mayor Nikitas Gryllis said. "But what we are reading in the foreign press, that there are a network of caves on Symi that are joined like tunnels and fill up with sea water, is wrong and they are far away from where we believe he was walking. Still, they will be checked too."

Police had worked on the assumption that the TV presenter went missing on the mile-long trail between the beach and Pedi until the CCTV footage emerged. The images, providing the first concrete evidence he made it to the village, were taken about 20 minutes after he left St Nikolas beach.

**'We've been looking from the air, land and sea, and still there's no sign that could lead us to him'**
***Police officer***

"There are about 100 people out there looking for him," the mayor of Symi, Eleftherios Papakaloudoukas, told the *Observer*.

The mayor said a trained search dog could only work for an hour yesterday morning due to high temperatures. Police said that with temperatures expected to reach 52C, it had been decided to send a helicopter.

A police officer coordinating the search operation said: "We've been looking for him from the air, land and sea. Divers have been sent in, the coastguard has been patrolling, private boats and yachts joined them, a helicopter and drones have also been deployed and still there's been no sign that could lead us to him."

The mayor's daughter, Mika Papakalodouka, said that residents were searching for Mosley. "It's such a small island to get lost on. It's so weird for us. Everybody is worried and looking for him."

Yiannis Tsavaris, a pharmacist, said: "There's not a person among us who hasn't taken it personally. It has saddened us." Greek rescue officials said the search would go on for as long as it takes.



*Michael Mosley on This Morning last August. Ken McKay/Shutterstock*

# Care of children at risk of suicide left to schools as NHS services are overwhelmed

Mental health referrals reach 'epidemic' levels as 32,000 youngsters wait more than two years for treatment

**Anna Fazackerley**

Children at risk of suicide are being refused places on waiting lists for mental health services because they are so oversubscribed, according to leading education figures.

A report last month by the Centre for Young Lives and the Child of the North multi-university research programme warned that the NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Camhs) are buckling under the strain of a "national epidemic" of children's mental health problems.

It revealed that at the end of last year 32,000 children had been waiting more than two years to be seen. Two-thirds of children were not directed to any form of interim support, it said, with self-harm and suicide while they waited "too familiar".

Anne Longfield, founder of the Centre for Young Lives, told the *Observer* that when she took office as the government's children's commissioner in 2015, she was shocked to discover a young person had to be suicidal to be guaranteed a Camhs appointment. Now, she said, after years of further funding cuts, thresholds for intervention are so high that even suicidal children are frequently turned away in many areas.

"Now trying to kill yourself is not enough to get mental health support," Longfield said. "They ask: 'Did the child really intend to end their life or not?' That is such a chilling state to be in. For any family, having a suicidal child is the most terrifying crisis. Often they hit this brick wall where they can't get professional help."

Referrals for children and young people's mental health services in England have been rising since before the pandemic, increasing from 340,000 in 2017-18 to 540,000 in 2019-20. However, last year the number of children and young people with active referrals soared to 949,000, with experts and schools blaming the impact of the pandemic, spiralling poverty and lack of support for families after cuts to public services.

The safeguarding lead at a primary school in the north-west, who asked to remain anonymous, said: "A child can say they want to end their life, but if they don't have a definite plan they won't be referred. Their parents are told to put all sharp objects away."

The school's headteacher said they were paying external counsellors to help their safeguarding team deliver therapy for 60 children whose parents were typically dealing with drug or alcohol addiction or domestic abuse, and often their own mental health problems. He said: "We are being asked to work way beyond our expertise on very traumatic cases."

Susie Beresford-Wylie, director of special educational needs and disabilities (Send) at Olympus Academy Trust, which runs nine schools in Bristol and Gloucestershire, said schools now tell parents of children with a suicide plan to go straight to A&E. But she added: "When they have been triaged there as needing Camhs and they are on a waiting list, that same child is sent back to school with no interim support."

She said Camhs had told parents that school was the best place to be for children with mental health problems, but that many cannot cope when they come in. "We have kids in toilets cutting themselves," she said.

An NHS England spokesperson said: "The NHS is providing mental health support to more children than ever before – with a more than 50% increase since 2019, while expanding provision as quickly as possible within the current five-year funding arrangements. We know there is more to do, and that's why plans are in place to ensure more than half of pupils can access an NHS mental health support team by next spring."

*In the UK and Ireland, Samaritans can be contacted on freephone 116 123, or email jo@samaritans.org or jo@samaritans.ie*

# From Uzbekistan to London, the Silk Road's revelatory treasures

**Dalya Alberge**

A monumental six-metre-long wall painting created in the 7th century, and 8th-century ivory figures carved for one of the world's oldest surviving chess sets, are among treasures set to be seen in Britain for the first time.

The items will travel from the ancient city of Samarkand to the UK for an exhibition opening in September, as part of the first ever loan from museums in Uzbekistan to the British Museum.

Silk Roads, a groundbreaking exhibition spanning AD500 to 1000, will go beyond the popular image of trade between east and west, with camel caravans and merchants selling silks and spices in bazaars, to explore connections between cultures and continents, centuries before the development of today's globalised world.

It will show that, rather than a single trade route, there were overlapping networks linking communities across Asia, Africa and Europe. More than 300 objects will include loans from 29 national and international institutions, many on display in the UK for the first time. Tickets for the exhibition, which runs until February, go on sale tomorrow.





*LEFT Detail from the 7th-century wall painting from the 'Hall of the Ambassadors' in Uzbekistan.*

*ABOVE A gold shoulder clasp, part of the exhibit at the British Museum which opens in September.*

Yu-ping Luk, one of the lead curators of the show, said: "We will of course have camels, and there will be silk and references to camel caravans that are also a very important part of the Silk Roads. But we wanted to go beyond that and tell a richer story of the networks in multiple directions, not just east-west but north-south and elsewhere, and also the movement of objects, peoples and ideas."

The six-metre wall painting, a vibrant depiction of a procession of people riding camels, horses and an elephant, is from the "Hall of the Ambassadors" in Samarkand. Dating from the 660s and part of a series excavated in the 1960s, it is an unparalleled example of art created by the region's ancient Sogdians, who were great traders. Its title derives from its portrayal of peoples of different origins, from neighbouring regions and as far as the Korean peninsula, who were coming to Samarkand to trade.

Luk, the British Museum's curator of Chinese paintings, prints and central Asian collections, said it showed the cosmopolitanism of the Sogdians: "We're really excited to be able to borrow it and show it for the first time in the UK." She said Silk Road traders are sometimes depicted as "peddlers or small-scale merchants". "But here is an image from their homeland that shows them having prospered from their trade."

The 8th-century ivory carvings are seven chess set pieces which have survived. Luk said: "They are among the earliest – if not the earliest – chess pieces known in the world. They were excavated from a site in Samarkand and are thought to date from the 700s. The figures represent part of an army. There are foot soldiers, horse riders, people riding chariots, an elephant rider. Ivory was a luxury commodity at the time, which indicates that this set was a high-value object.

"When chess was first developed in India around AD500, before spreading to the Middle East and Europe, it was a game for training military strategy among the elite. This is a great example of how, during the period we're covering in the exhibition, all these networks and connections have a legacy to the contemporary period, when chess as a game is spreading."

Due to its scope and geographical coverage, the exhibition will feature objects from every department across the British Museum, including Indian garnets discovered in Suffolk and Chinese ceramics found in Egypt, reflecting the astonishing reach of the Silk Road networks.



# The 30-year pitch: artist finally picked for Royal Academy summer show

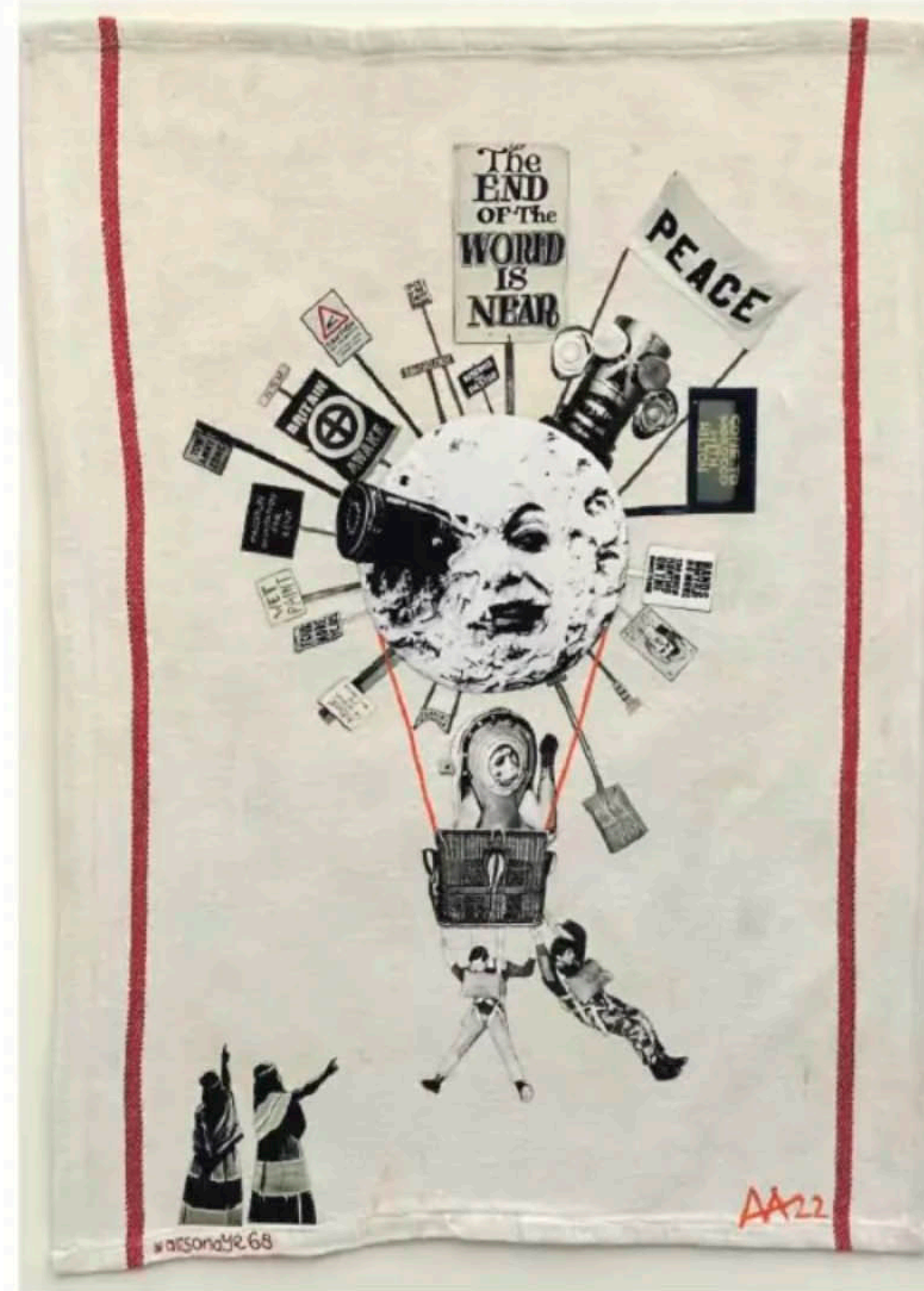
But now she's made it into the exhibition, textile sculptor Alison Aye isn't sure she likes the taste of success, writes *Alice Fisher*

Artist Alison Aye had a surprising reaction to being accepted for this year's Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy. Founded in 1769, it's the world's oldest open submission show – a chance for hobbyist painters to hang next to Turner prize-winners and artists such as Tracey Emin and David Hockney, with everything for sale.

The 58-year-old textile and collage artist, who is based in London, has submitted work to the Royal Academy (RA) every year for the last 31 years, and always been rejected. But when, this year, she found out she had finally succeeded, she felt conflicted. "It's the establishment acknowledging me and I don't know if I like it," she said. "There's a part of me that thinks being on the losing side is all right."

In being rejected, Aye was always in good company: John Constable, Edouard Manet and Banksy have had their work turned down. Aye has also been inspired by her rejection over the decades, creating the artwork RA Bastard Shites, 2018-2022 about the exhibition, which led to her appearance on comedian Joe Lycett's 2022 documentary *Summer Exhibitionist*, about artists who submit to the show. Lycett successfully submitted a bust of a man made from a Pringles tin, called "Chris", to the exhibition in 2018, and, last year, a painting titled I drink a crisp, cold beer in a pool in Los Angeles while Gary Lineker looks on in disgust, which he priced at £1,354,999. In the documentary, which aired on BBC Two in 2022, Lycett smuggled Aye's unsuccessful submission that year into the RA on varnishing day, when artists ready their work for public viewing, and pinned it to the breakfast buffet table, an act that Aye found hilarious. "The buffet is so on-brand for me. Perfect."

*'It's the establishment recognising me, and I'm not sure if I like it. A part of me thinks being on the losing side is all right'*




*ABOVE Shifting to the Moon by Alison Aye, left.*

But when the show opens this week, she will be an official exhibitor, one of 482 showing there for the first time, out of the 16,500 submissions for 2024. There are about 1,000 exhibitors in total.

Aye's work for the exhibition, Shifting to the Moon, is quintessential of her style: subversive, political and personal. Shifting is slang from the north-east, where Aye grew up, for moving house. The work is made of hand-sewn images from newspapers and books to an old tea towel depicting some hapless members of the British royal family floating away on a hot air balloon fashioned from the moon in Georges Méliès's film *Le Voyage Dans La Lune*.



*LEFT Works including Joe Lycett's piece, indicated, at the 2023 Summer Exhibition.* *Guy Bell/ Shutterstock*

Aye works constantly with paper and print for an ongoing art project which involves cutting a face from a news story or book each day and stitching it to fabric, to cataloguing world events from her perspective. She also keeps a meticulous record of where each image is from and who is depicted. "The faces pick me – they tend to be someone unknown who is part of a well-known story. Say, a picture of an unknown protester campaigning against shit in the ocean."

The Summer Exhibition is always a cultural talking point. Though one Royal Academician organises the show each year – for 2024, it's sculptor Ann Christopher – the submission of work by such a vast number of artists is meant to make the show feel representative of different creative viewpoints.

Aye is not so sure. It costs £40 to submit an artwork to be considered for the show, and that's before you get it framed, she says. "Loads of people can't afford that. I'm fine because I can get my Oyster card out to drop my work off. If you live in Glasgow, it's not so easy."

Aye works a number of day jobs and the only profit she has ever made from selling art was in 2022 when she netted £894. Before that, her best year was when she only made a loss of £375.92. Despite this, she donates to the charity Arts Emergency which helps young people find careers in the creative industries. She notes that the organisation recently posted on Instagram about the steep drop in working-class artists.

She grew up in Spennymoor, County Durham. Her mother worked as a seamstress and her dad as a miner. She left school at 16 – "no one mentioned sixth form, and most kids at my school didn't even consider it" – but found out that she could study for a BTec at the Newcastle School of Art and Technology.

"It was an hour and 15 minutes on the bus each way, but turned my life around. I didn't have culture shock when I moved to London, but I had it going from my town to Newcastle. It changed everything. It was a wonderful place.

"My dad was a pitman and he was on strike all the time I was there and the teachers knew… and they gave me art materials."

Money is still a constraint. Aye started using textiles because she couldn't afford paint but now loves working with fabric and thread. This year, she joined the 62 Group of Textile Artists, a co-operative originally founded in 1962 to support embroidery workers whose craft was dismissed as a hobby for ladies.

Does she have any advice for artists hoping to be picked for next year's Summer Exhibition? "Don't enter your work in the mixed media category. I've been unsuccessful every time doing that – I accidentally entered my piece as a sculpture this year and I think that's why I got in. Other textile artists have said the same."

Aye is still considering what she will do next year. Is acceptance the end or the beginning of a new phase of work? "I'm not sure yet. But I can't imagine making art if there was no rejection. Wouldn't that be boring?"

# Social rent homes fall by 260,000 in a decade

Chaminda Jayanetti

More than a quarter of a million social rent homes in England have been lost in the last decade, according to analysis of government statistics.

Between April 2013 and April 2023, the number of social housing homes owned by local authorities and housing associations in England fell by 260,464 units, according to the charity Shelter.

Polly Neate, its chief executive, said: "We are seeing more social housing being sold off or demolished than built, despite the staggering 1.3m households stuck on social housing waiting lists in desperate need of a genuinely affordable home.

"Without enough social housing, every other area in the system bottlenecks. As a result, the country is hitting one shameful record after the next, with 145,800 children homeless in temporary accommodation – the highest number ever – private rents at record highs and rising evictions."

The fall in England's social housing stock has been driven by a combination of property demolitions, the right to buy scheme that allowed council tenants to buy their homes, and housing providers converting social rent accommodation into markedly more expensive "affordable rent" housing.

The number of social rent homes lost in these ways exceeds additions to the social housing stock in the form of new-builds and acquisitions.

There was a net loss of 11,684 social rent homes in 2022-23, the most recent year for which figures have been published. Some of the biggest losses occurred in Birmingham, Leicester, Barnet and Leeds.

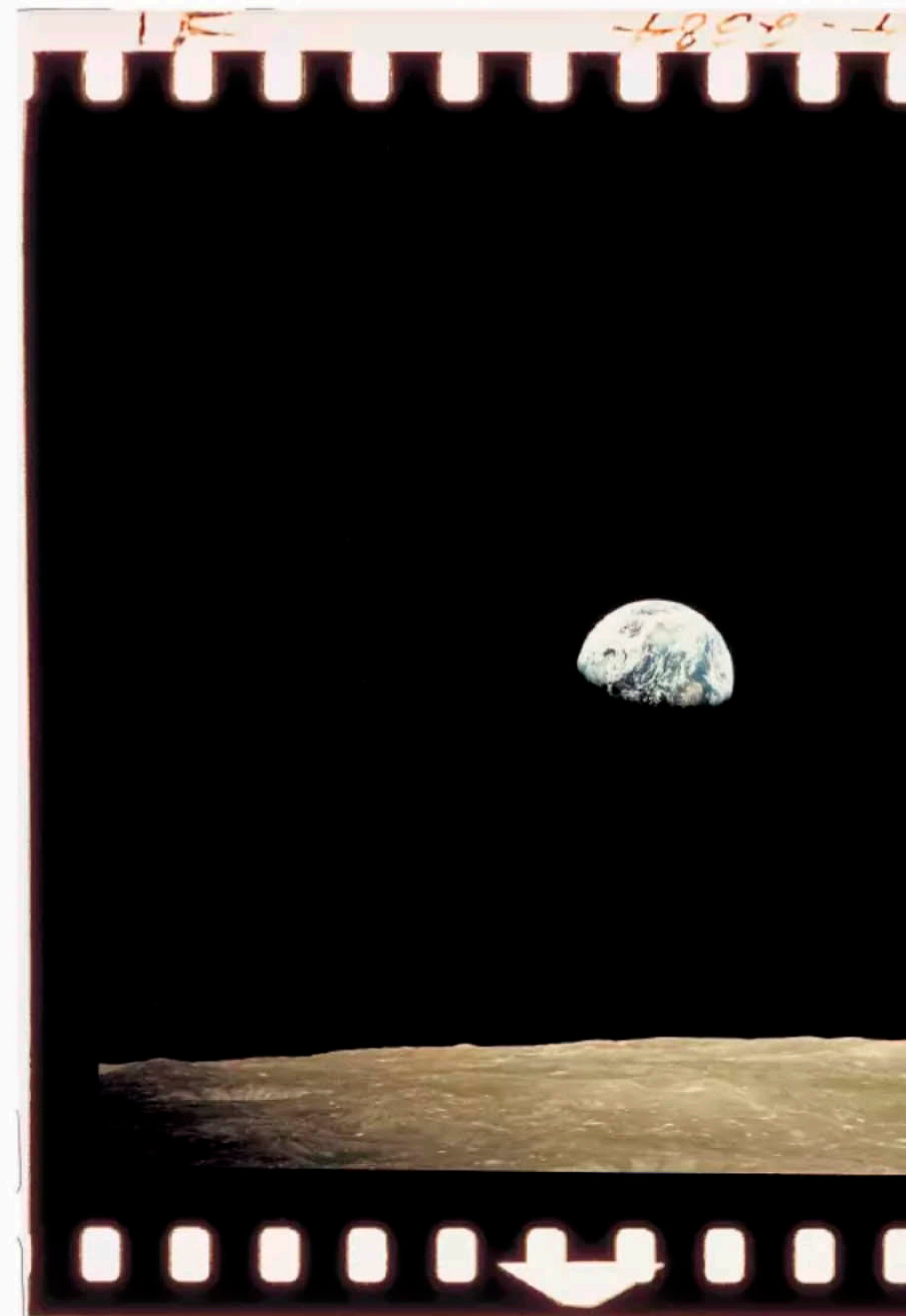
Neate called on all parties to address the issue: "Political parties of all stripes must commit to building genuinely affordable social homes – 90,000 a year over 10 years is the only way to end the housing emergency for good."

Claire Holland, housing spokesperson for the Local Government Association, said: "Councils can play a critical role in solving this country's



*Shelter's Polly Neate said 1.3m households were stuck on social housing waiting lists.*





*RIGHT 'A rebuke to the vanity of humankind': William Anders' 1968 image of Earth rising beyond the lunar horizon. Getty*

# 'Space epiphany': astronaut who took iconic Earthrise image dies in plane crash

Robin McKie
*Science Editor*

William Anders, the astronaut who took the "Earthrise" photo of our planet appearing over the moon against the deep black of space, has died in a plane crash. He was 90.

"He was a great pilot and we will miss him terribly," said his son, retired US Air Force Lt Col Greg Anders. The former astronaut, who was piloting the plane, was the only one on board the Beech A45 when it crashed off Washington state, said the US's Federal Aviation Association. It has launched an investigation of the crash with the National Transportation Safety Board.

Anders' photograph was the first colour image of Earth seen from lunar orbit and is now considered to be one of the most important images of modern history. It was taken on Christmas Eve in 1968 during the Apollo 8 moon mission and is credited with triggering the global environmental movement by showing how delicate our world looked from space.

"I clearly remember my first sight [of the Earthrise photograph]," David Attenborough once recalled. "I suddenly realised how isolated and lonely we are on Earth."

The Apollo 8 mission was not slated to travel to the moon and was scheduled instead to test equipment in low-Earth orbit. However, Nasa was told, incorrectly, by the CIA that the Soviet Union was preparing its own crewed lunar mission, and so redirected the mission to the moon.

Early on Christmas Eve, the Apollo 8 capsule – carrying Anders and fel-

housing crisis if they are given the powers and resources to build more of the genuinely affordable homes our communities desperately need.

"Our white paper sets out a range of proposals for whoever forms the next government to boost housing supply. This includes granting five-year local housing deals, which combines national funding, for all areas of the country that want them.

"This will provide certainty and efficiencies and could support delivery of an additional 200,000 social homes in a 30-year period."

Shelter also found that private rents in England are on average £828 a month higher than social rents.

Karly, a mother of three from Bideford in Devon, was made homeless in 2020. After two months, she was able to move into social rented housing, for which she pays £470 a month rent. "People on the same road who rent privately are paying anywhere between £850 and £1,100," she said.

A Conservative party spokesperson said: "Thanks to our clear plan and bold action we have delivered 1m homes this parliament and almost 700,000 more affordable homes since 2010."






*Rugby league fans at Wembley pay tribute to Rob Burrow, who died last week, before yesterday's Challenge Cup final between Wigan Warriors and Warrington Wolves (Match report, Sport, page 16).*

*Tom Jenkins/the Observer*



*LEFT Anders, right, with Borman and Lovell in front of the Saturn 5 rocket, in Florida, October 1968.* *Getty*

*BELOW Apollo 8's crew: William Anders, James Lovell and Frank Borman* *Universal Images Group*



low crewmen Jim Lovell and Frank Borman – reached its destination.

For its first three revolutions, the astronauts kept its windows pointing down towards the moon and filmed craters and mountains below. Reconnaissance for subsequent landings was key for the mission. On its fourth orbit, Borman rolled the craft and pointed its windows towards the horizon to get a navigational fix. Minutes later, he saw a blue-and-white blob edging over the horizon: the Earth, a quarter of a million miles away, rising from behind its moon.

There was a brief battle – won by Anders – to find a camera to photograph the scene. His first image was black-and-white and showed Earth peeping over the horizon. A few minutes later, having stuffed a roll of 70mm colour film into his Hasselblad, he took the photograph that became an icon of 20th-century technological endeavour and ecological awareness.

"We came all this way to explore the moon and the most important thing that we discovered was the Earth," Anders later recalled.

This view was backed by Borman. "It was the most beautiful, heart-catching sight of my life, one that sent a torrent of nostalgia, of sheer homesickness, surging through me. It was the only thing in space that had any colour to it. Everything else was either black or white. But not the Earth."

Anders said he wished he had taken more photos but Borman, the mission commander, was concerned about resting his crew and forced them to sleep – "which probably made sense".

Anders was born on 17 October 1933, in Hong Kong. His father was a Navy lieutenant aboard the USS Panay, a US gunboat in China's Yangtze River. After graduating from the Naval Academy in 1955, Anders served as a fighter pilot in the air force before becoming an astronaut.

He retired from the space programme in 1969 and later served on the Atomic Energy Commission as the US chairman of the joint US-USSR technology exchange programme for nuclear fission and fusion power, and as ambassador to Norway.

However, his Earthrise photograph will be his enduring legacy. With its view of our planet's blue ocean and jackets of cloud – its human settlements invisible – "it is a rebuke to the vanity of humankind", argues the UK historian Robert Poole. "Earthrise was an epiphany in space."

# ‘It shaped generations of my family’: David Olusoga on a murder’s lasting impact

Historian reveals the devastating effect felt down the years since an 1890s gun killing committed by his great-great-grandfather. *Vanessa Thorpe* reports



*ABOVE Slums in the working-class district of Byker in Newcastle upon Tyne in the 1900s. Alamy*



*LEFT David Olusoga; below, a newspaper report of the murder trial of his great-great-grandfather George Ewart. Karen Robinson/the Observer*

One newspaper headline called it “The Tragedy at Byker”, a revenge killing that shocked the working-class area of Victorian Newcastle upon Tyne, but for the renowned historian and broadcaster David Olusoga it is a story that went on to shape one side of his family.

Speaking for the first time about a murder for which his great-great-grandfather was convicted, Olusoga has revealed the lasting impact on his relatives, long after the violent death in 1896 on the streets of Byker.

“The overwhelming sentiment is sadness,” said the historian, best known for his BBC Two documentaries *A House Through Time* and *Union*, as he described the feeling of “bad blood” that was passed down the generations; an inherited sense of guilt that prevented his own grandfather ever taking a drink. “It shaped his life. I never saw him lose his temper. His level of control was striking,” said Olusoga.

“This event in the 1890s, this reverberated through my family,” Olusoga is to explain in a new podcast that will re-examine historical crimes. “It shaped my grandfather’s life. He was told by his mother that her father had been the murderer and that in this Victorian way that there was this idea of sins of the father, that bad blood could be passed between generations.”

The fatal incident at the core of this legacy of guilt took place on the corner of Shields Road and Dalton Street in Byker one afternoon as the victim, a younger man called Daniel Gray, stood talking to friends while on his way back to his work as a painter and decorator.

Olusoga’s great-great-grandfather George Ewart crossed the road and drew a revolver. His target, Gray, called for help, crying out: “Murder! I’ve been shot,” according to witnesses, and ran into a shop, begging the owners to lock the door as bullets came in through the window. Gray died of internal bleeding from a wound to his side as he lay on the shop’s floor, in spite of the efforts of two doctors called to the scene.

“I have been to stand on that street corner,” said Olusoga this weekend. “It was a powerful experience. All the key landmarks are still there.”

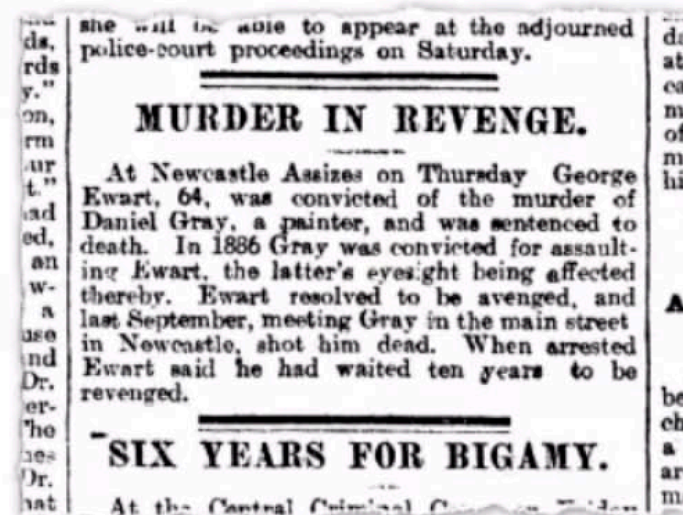
In an account given for the first episode of *Was Justice Served?*, made in collaboration with the Find My Past genealogy site, Olusoga and the criminologist David Wilson acknowledge the way the public records surrounding a crime are often the only mark left on history by the working classes.

“If you want to understand the lives of ordinary people, then often the only trace left is in the records of criminality,” Wilson said.

Olusoga says in the podcast: “It’s pretty ironic that the most vivid of our ancestors, the most vocal of our ancestors, if we are of working-class backgrounds, are those who committed crimes or were the victims of crimes.”

The 54-year-old academic has a Nigerian father and is related to Ewart, who was of Scottish descent, through his mother. “I don’t believe in pride or shame in association with ancestors or previous generations of my nations – but you can look at people from the past and, perhaps especially if you’re related to them, just feel the tragedy of what they went through and the challenges of the times,” he said.

The seemingly senseless crime was in fact the result of a fight between the two men 10 years earlier. In 1886, Gray had called on Ewart’s son, Richard, and did not believe that he was away from home in London. In a doorstep tussle outside the Ewart family home, Gray inflicted serious damage to Ewart’s eye. His eyesight was already impaired and the new injury changed his life. Gray was sentenced to two months in prison for assault. After the killing a decade later, Ewart, a painter and cabinet maker who was still living in Byker with his wife and children, went peaceably to the cells, saying of his victim: “Yes, he blinded me. I have been waiting a long time but finally got him.”



she will be able to appear at the adjourned police-court proceedings on Saturday.

MURDER IN REVENGE.

At Newcastle Assizes on Thursday George Ewart, 64, was convicted of the murder of Daniel Gray, a painter, and was sentenced to death. In 1886 Gray was convicted for assaulting Ewart, the latter's eyesight being affected thereby. Ewart resolved to be avenged, and last September, meeting Gray in the main street in Newcastle, shot him dead. When arrested Ewart said he had waited ten years to be revenged.

SIX YEARS FOR BIGAMY.

At the Central Criminal C...

**‘My own grandfather was told there was this idea of bad blood that was passed between generations’**
*David Olusoga*

Speaking from Colorado, Jen Baldwin, the genealogist who co-presents the podcast, said she had been moved by Olusoga’s response. “He already knew something of this crime and understood how it had affected his family,” she said. “The point of the podcast series is to look for what we can learn about history through looking at a criminal case.”

“This is a story that has shaped the culture within my family,” Olusoga reflects. “It shaped attitudes that were passed on between generations; ideas about control, very Victorian and Edwardian ideas that actions or predilections could be passed down between generations, and a sense among some generations in my family that they had to control themselves because something terrible had been done by a member of our family with whom we shared kinship. This idea of bad blood.”

Ewart pleaded insanity and his daughter, Sylvia, gave evidence that her father had been abusive to her mother and testified to his depressive behaviour. The jury found him guilty, with a strong recommendation for mercy, but he was sentenced to death by hanging.

“For me the most emotive evidence of mental illness comes from George’s daughter, Sylvia, who is a teenager, and she goes to court and she has to testify about the erratic and violent behaviour of her father in public,” said Olusoga.

“They said the witness gave her evidence in a quiet, ladylike and pathetic way, and there seemed to be deep sympathy with her within the court.”

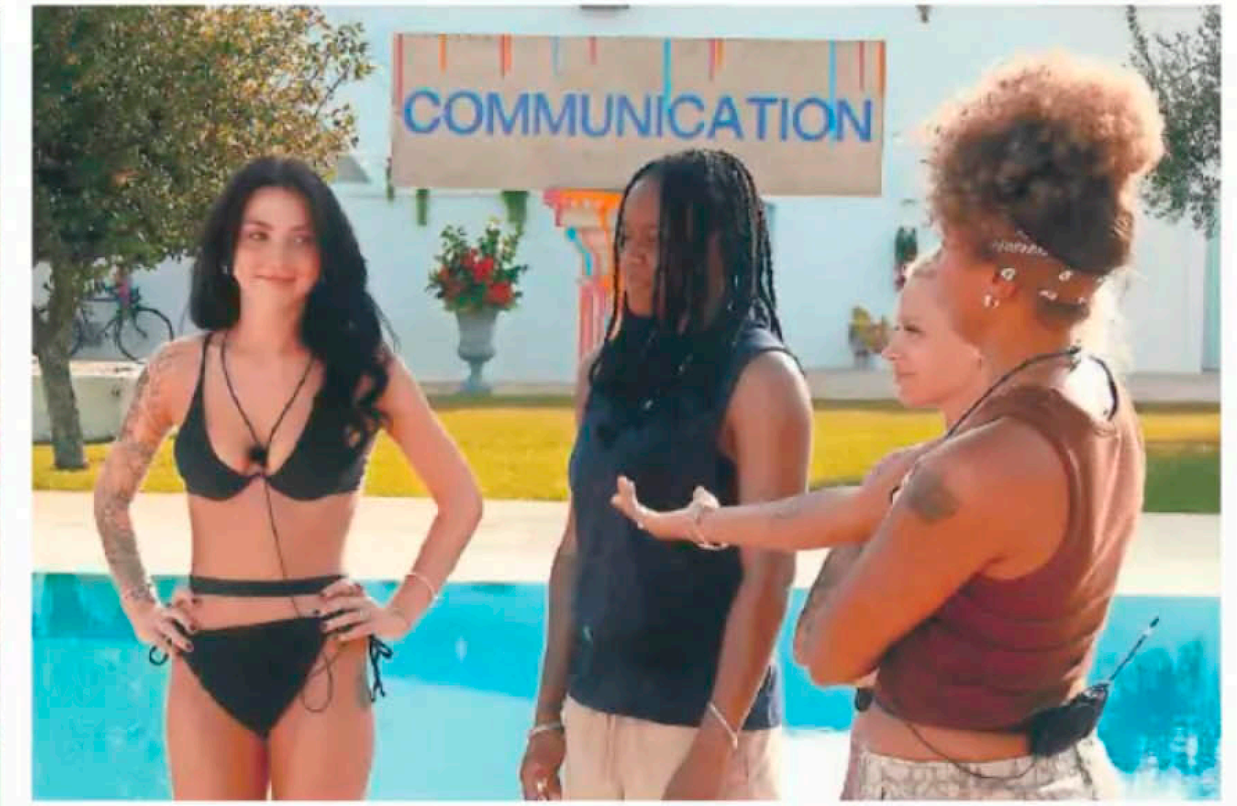
A local petition against the planned execution was signed by thousands and delivered to the home secretary, who sent doctors to Newcastle. They judged Ewart to be criminally insane. He was sent to what was then the Broadmoor criminal lunatic asylum.

Olusoga said: “I did not know about the petition. It shows there was a strong sense that an injustice had been done.”

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING The recycled paper content of UK newspapers in 2017 was 64.6%

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Left, Amy, Hannah and Meg; top, Cara, Naee, Meg and Lailah; above, Lisha and Meg. BBC/Twofour

# 'It's real and it's deep': lesbian dating show hailed as TV gamechanger

The hit series I Kissed a Girl has been praised by a BBC controller for 'changing the conversation' around reality television, reports Aneesa Ahmed

The hit dating show *I Kissed a Girl (IKAG)* will be a "reference point" for future representation of LGBTQ+ people on reality TV, a BBC controller has said. The *Love Island*-style show, which featured only women and was presented by Dannii Minogue, concluded its first season last weekend.

It was a spin-off of last year's *I Kissed a Boy (IKAB)*, the UK's first gay dating show, which last month the BBC announced has been commissioned for a second series.

Fiona Campbell, controller of BBC iPlayer, youth audience and BBC Three, said *IKAG* had seen the highest proportion of viewers under the age of 35 in the past week of any show on the BBC's streaming platform.

"Clips got 15m views across all BBC social media accounts, which is up there with existing big shows such as *The Young Offenders*," said Campbell.

"I think it probably will change conversation about reality shows going forward … it will always become a reference point in producers' and broadcasters' origination conversations."

Last month, US TV network Hulu acquired both seasons of *IKAB* and *IKAG*. "I think that just shows how far that editorial conversation has gone – right to America. Because nobody had really done [LGBTQ+ reality TV] before," said Campbell.

The popularity of the series showed the demand for LGBTQ+ representation in the genre, she added.

The show sees 10 single women enter the Masseria, a villa in Italy, in the hope of finding love, and begin by sharing a kiss. Over nine episodes and a reunion, some contestants are eliminated and some new ones arrive.

Contestants said they were proud to be part of the show. Thea Hallow, who entered *IKAG* on episode five, said: "I've never seen anyone like me represented before. We weren't [presented as] stereotypes … I can't think of anyone who is dark-skinned, Black, femme and queer who's been on TV or anywhere. I hope that we can act as representation and that people can be more bold about who they are in any field."

Hallow said she had not expected such a positive response. "The impact has been massive and I've received so many beautiful messages from fans of *IKAG*. I hope the entertainment industry also sees there's a desire for this type of diverse representation."

Amy Spalding, another contestant, said: "I'll be cycling on a Lime bike and people will flag me down – it's crazy. I've had people message me saying they felt comfortable enough to come out to their parents. People have also said: 'I've always been told that I'm too much, but watching you on the show has made me realise that I should love myself and that someone will love me for me' … it makes me cry almost daily."

Lindsay McGlone, a queer digital content creator and burlesque event producer, said the show had been groundbreaking. "You don't see queer representations that aren't sensationalised or made into a tabloid-feel caricature. With the queer community, there's a rawness of emotions and a big emphasis on connection and comradeship. You see that in the show, and you almost feel that you are in the show with them. They're all sharing experiences that feel so true and real to a lot of us."

> *'The impact has been massive and I've had so many beautiful messages from fans'*
> *Thea Hallow, contestant*

Rebecca Hall, 24, is a fan of the series. She said: "It was juicy, it was spicy, and who doesn't love gay gossip? But also there were so many important conversations between the contestants. For example, when Georgia [Robert] spoke about why some people find it important to label themselves lesbian instead of queer. It was good to see this on a reality TV show."

Dan Gray, one of the executive producers of the series, said there were LGBTQ+ women in senior roles throughout production, including casting the contestants. The producers also took input from the contestants themselves, he said.

"The process taught me a lot about the culture of queer women. During casting, the girls who were auditioning and interviewing kept talking about their dating 'red flags', unprompted. We incorporated the concept of red flags into a 'challenge' on the show. We wanted things like that reflected."

McGlone said it was important to show LGBTQ+ culture to a new audience. "Heterosexual people would really benefit from seeing how connected and community focused we are. It's not always sexualised, and it is real and deep. It was such a joy to watch."



RIGHT Dannii Minogue, the presenter of I Kissed a Girl.

# Revealed: king's arms hidden on 1776 call for US independence

Dalya Alberge

It is a founding document of the US and inspired the Declaration of Independence and the purge of English power from the colonies.

But, ironically, George Mason's seminal Virginia Declaration of Rights of 1776 was written on paper watermarked with the arms of the king of England, a British expert has discovered.

As one of the most significant documents in US history, the Virginia declaration is held in a secure vault at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. Dr Ian Christie-Miller, a former visiting research fellow at London University and a specialist in paper analysis, has discovered a watermark that shows the Hanover crown and the emblem of King George III, under whose rule the US colonies were lost.

He told the *Observer*: "The value of watermark research has been widely known but ignored for years. The evidence has been sitting there unnoticed until now."

Christie-Miller made the discovery while researching his forthcoming philosophy book, *Conscience – The Restoration*. "It is ironic that paper bearing the arms of the king was used by George Mason for his first draft declaration, which was to lead to the overthrow of English power in the American colonies. Apparently he had few qualms of conscience in using that watermarked paper."

The US war of independence led to 13 American colonies throwing off British rule to establish the sovereign United States of America.

British attempts to impose unpopular taxes had contributed to growing



*George III's watermark is on the Virginia declaration.*

# Locking vulnerable children up is moral failure, says top judge

Louise Tickle

Vulnerable children with complex needs are being locked away in unregulated placements and are being "gravely damaged by the state" while their parents are driven to despair, according to England's former top family judge. Sir James Munby terms the lack of provision of safe and therapeutic homes "a shocking moral failure".

According to the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, the number of applications for "deprivation of liberty" orders for children suffering from psychological and behavioural difficulties reached 1,368 last year.

Writing in the *Observer* today, Munby, the former president of the family division of the high court, said that soaring applications for this draconian measure were a sad reflection of the catastrophic failure to support children whose complex needs frequently lead to self-harm and suicide attempts.

Lambasting the government, which he said has "failed to address the dire lack of suitable provision", Munby referred to "dozens and dozens" of judgments expressing his fellow judges' concerns, which have been published since his own "blood on our hands" ruling about a 17-year-old girl called "X", which made national headlines in 2017.

Reporting by the news site Tortoise Media last year showed that "any help X received came far too late to save her", Munby said. Barely into her 20s, X – not a criminal – was ultimately incarcerated in a high security mental health hospital, where she remains.

"Seven years on from my judgment about her case, the situation for other children countrywide is even worse than I dared to fear," he warned.

In 2021, the supreme court called the plight of these children "a scandal containing all the ingredients for a tragedy". Persistent efforts over years by journalists to publicise the escalating crisis mean no one can ever claim the scandal is a hidden one, Munby writes, citing the recent "shocking" investigation by the BBC, which interviewed children on their "heartbreaking" experiences of being forcibly detained in unsuitable placements under deprivation of liberty orders.

The *Observer* recently reported on hundreds of very vulnerable children being sent to unregulated homes because of a chronic shortage of secure local authority units.

Meanwhile, the government has done nothing of any substance or value to help these most vulnerable children, Munby says.

His successor, Sir Andrew McFarlane, attempted last year to engage the secretary of state for education, Gillian Keegan, in the situation of another suicidal teenage girl for whom no secure, therapeutic placement could be found.

Keegan was ordered to come to court. After she refused, his published judgment expressed his "genuine surprise and real dismay that the issue has, seemingly, not been taken up in any meaningful way in parliament, in government or in wider public debate". McFarlane said: "It was, I observed, shocking to see that the Department for Education seemed to be simply washing its hands of this chronic problem."

Munby warns that the many published judgments about distressed and damaged children detained with no contact with the outside world "paint a picture of a system unable to cope with the rising numbers of young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, almost always born out of trauma or neglect in childhood".

When a system is routinely locking up vulnerable children in highly inappropriate settings, the country is faced with "yet another shocking moral failure – a moral failure by the state and by society" he says, before questioning whether any party would address the issue during the election campaign.

**ON OTHER PAGES**
Judges are sick of having to lock up children who need help
Comment, James Munby, page 41

tensions between the Crown and colonists, who resorted to armed rebellion. The king opposed their bid for independence, although he was not directly responsible for policies such as the Stamp Act of 1765, which was passed by parliament.

Peter Thompson, associate professor of American history at Oxford University, said: "The paper may have had to be compliant with the Stamp Act – which deepens the irony.

"I wonder, if Mason had had a choice, whether he would still have chosen stamped paper, so as to make a point of complying with the law, even though he didn't agree with it." The catalogue description notes: "This uniquely influential document was also used by James Madison in drawing up the Bill of Rights, 1789, and the Marquis de Lafayette in drafting the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, 1789."

Mason wrote: "All men are born equally free and independant [sic], and have certain inherent natural rights … among which are the Enjoyment of Life and Liberty, with the Means of acquiring and possessing Property, and pursueing [sic] and obtaining Happiness and Safety."

# AI that predicts heart attacks to save thousands more lives

## Oxford University team says technology that finds data in CT scans could be rolled out across UK hospitals

**Robin McKie**
*Science Editor*

An artificial intelligence system that can identify people who are likely to suffer heart attacks up to 10 years in the future could soon be in operation across Britain.

The technology, which could save thousands of lives a year, is being assessed by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) and a decision on its use in the NHS is expected by the end of the year.

The project's scientists have also revealed they are working on similar AI systems to predict whether someone is in danger of suffering a stroke and to spot those at risk of conditions such as diabetes.

"This technology has now been tested at several hospitals across the UK and results have been tremendously encouraging," said Prof Charalambos Antoniades, leader of the Orfan (Oxford Risk Factors and Non Invasive Imaging) study. "If installed nationally, it would help save thousands of people from suffering early heart attacks or deaths from heart disease."

More than 300,000 people in Britain each year suffered severe chest pains and were given CT scans to discover if they were suffering from cardiac abnormalities such as arterial blockages, said Antoniades. Fewer than 20% of those scanned were found to have obstructions or dangerous narrowing of their coronary arteries, however. "The remaining 80%-plus show no abnormalities. They are reassured and sent home, very often without any medication," said Antoniades, chair of cardiovascular medicine at the University of Oxford. "However, these reassurances are often misplaced."

In fact, about two-thirds of this "safe" group go on to suffer major – sometimes fatal – cardiac events, including heart attacks. "Clearly we have been missing signals from our scans that could tell us about those who are in real danger," he added. "It is a massive healthcare problem, and we believe AI is the perfect technology to deal with it."

The research, led by a team at Oxford University's Radcliffe Department of Medicine and published in the *Lancet* last week, has been designed to spot the abnormalities that are being missed from standard CT (computed tomography) scans. This knowledge would allow doctors to give the patients preventative treatments such as anti-inflammatory drugs.

Much of the problem was that damage to an artery caused by inflammation was not picked up by a CT scan, Antoniades said. "Our discovery was to find a way to bring up hidden information by using AI to enhance our CT scan images in order to show what damage has been done. In the past, we were not able to picture this but now we can."

The technique uses data on the characteristics of coronary plaques, as well as changes in the fat around inflamed arteries, to provide key information about the health status of our heart arteries. "Essentially, these readings tell us what is the absolute risk of a patient having a fatal cardiac event over the next 10 years," he said.

These risk factors were originally worked out using US case studies-but the data has since been evaluated using 40,000 patients at UK hospitals.

"What we found was clear-cut. Patients who were shown to have high inflammation in their coronary arteries were also found to be at extremely high risk of suffering severe cardiac illness, such as heart attacks. We have found a way to pinpoint the hidden factors that lead to heart attacks." Overall, the study, funded by the British Heart Foundation, revealed that in 45% of cases, clinicians decided to change a patient's treatment in view of data that was provided by AI analysis. These treatments include giving high doses of statins or other drugs such as colchicine, which are known to reduce risks of cardiovascular illness.



*Prof Antoniades said: 'We have found a way to pinpoint hidden factors that lead to heart attack.'*

Antoniades added: "We are also planning to expand delivery of this UK-made technology in the US, where it is also under evaluation by the Food and Drug Administration, and in Europe where it is already approved for clinical use."

And in Britain, Nice is now reviewing the clinical impact and the cost effectiveness of the technology. "If it gives a positive recommendation, the technology will become available in the entire NHS," added Antoniades. "We hope to have the decision before the end of this year."

# How treehouses went from childhood favourite to the height of glamping luxury

A holiday up close to nature has become a top choice for tourists



**Alice Fisher**
*Lifestyle Editor*

Simon Dickson thinks there's nothing like seeing a nuthatch on the branch of a 100-year-old oak right outside your window. For Jason Thawley, the best view is the dappled shadows of a tree canopy over your bed. And the treehouse designers are finding that tourists agree with them.

Treehouses are fast becoming the UK's most sought-after holiday destinations, as travellers look for something special to help them tune out and immerse themselves in nature.

Established hotels, glamping companies and letting agencies are adding treehouses to their portfolios. Britain's first treehouse hotel, TreeDwellers, opened in the Cotswolds in March, and the first tree tent campsite opens in West Sussex next month.

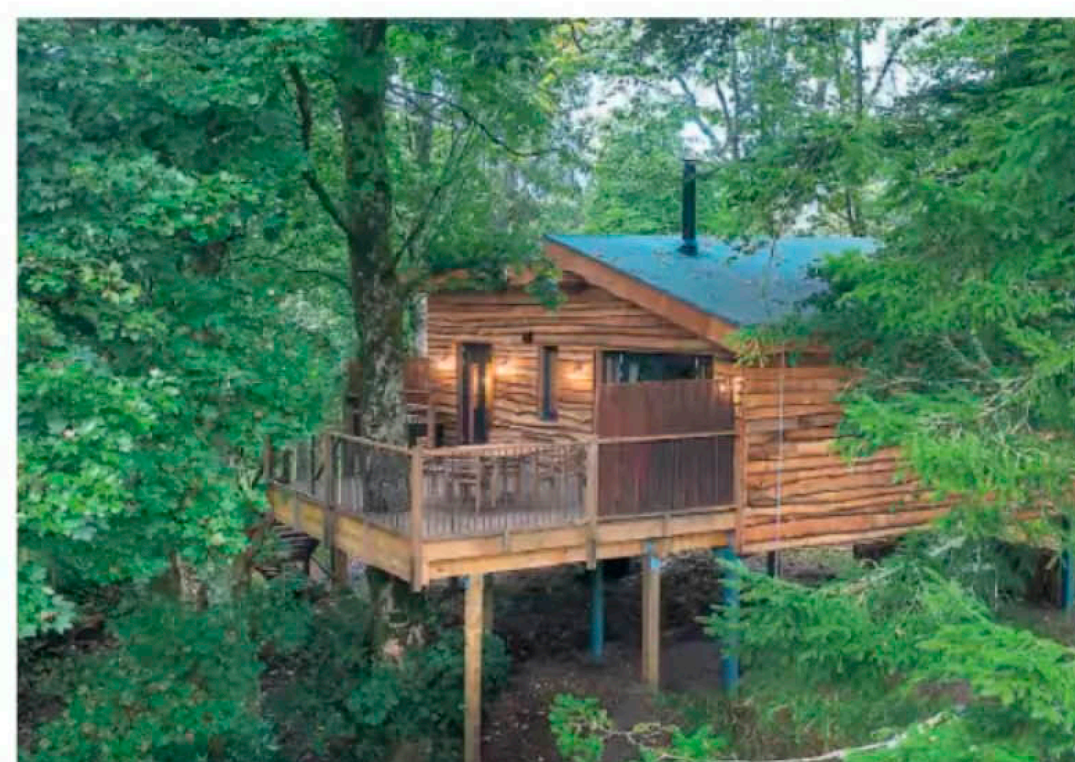
Travel company Canopy & Stars, which specialises in luxury glamping (glamorous camping), found that sophisticated cabins and treehouses now generate 70% of its revenue, according to its 2024 market report, and represent more than half of its property collection. Six of its 10 most booked spaces in 2023 were treehouses.

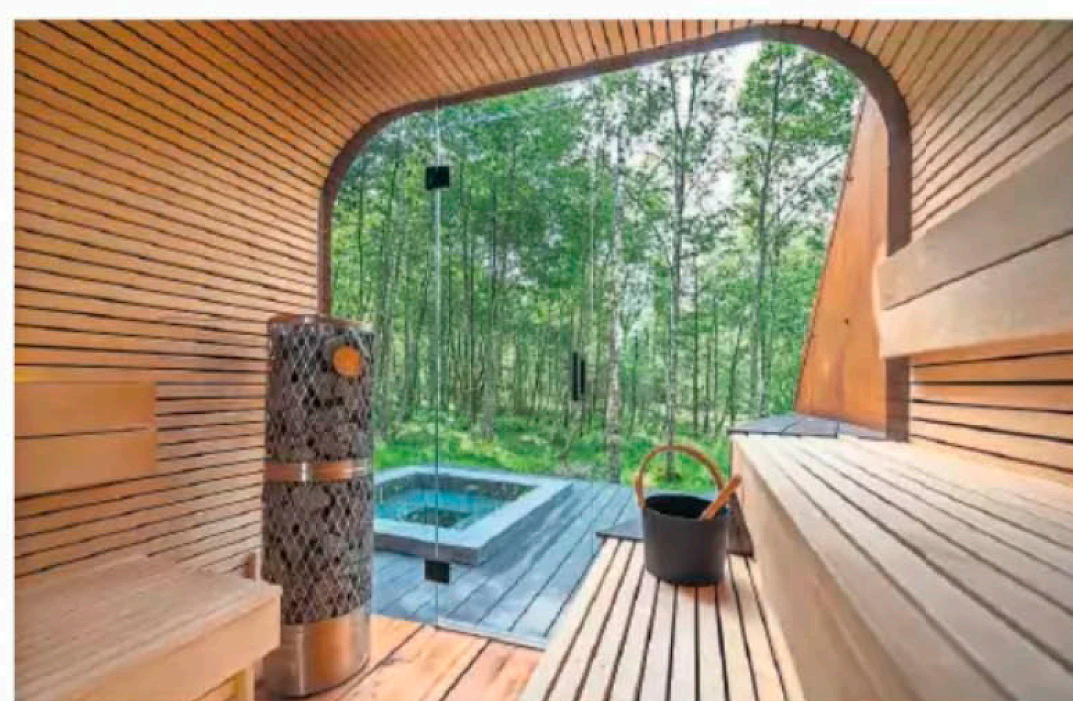
Liz Simpson, co-founder of Kip Hideaways, which specialises in nature-focused, self-catering holidays, said: "When we did the original research for Kip five years ago there were very few treehouses, and they tended to be super expensive, or booked up for months if not years in advance, as they were so unusual.

"But want – and need – of nature-based retreats exploded after lockdown, and treehouses are the ultimate rewilding experience; you're fully immersed in a tree canopy."



LEFT
Jason Thawley's Tree Tent – an orb dangling from a tree, at Pennard Hill farm in Somerset.





ABOVE
Simon Dickson's The Treehouses at Lanrick, Perthshire, nestled among the woods, and a view inside the sauna, left.

The growing popularity of treehouses is part of holidaymakers' ongoing love affair with glamping. The post-lockdown ban on overseas travel saw many holidaymakers try camping or glamping for the first time, with an increase in demand for holidays that connect travellers to nature.

"A key appeal to holidaymakers comes from the childlike whimsy of being among trees," said Thawley, who is the founder and design director of Tree Tents, a company that produces specialist structures that can be installed in the canopy.

> *'A key appeal is the childlike whimsy of being among trees. UK woodlands bring peace and consistency'*
> *Jason Thawley, designer*

"There is also the positive effect that nature, and trees in particular, has on our mental health and wellbeing. The UK woodlands, full of life and colour, bring us peace and consistency in an ever-changing world."

In 2023, the value of the UK glamping market was estimated at more than £150m. It is expected to rise by 10.7% between 2024 and 2030.

There has been a shift from the yurts, teepees and safari tents of the first wave of glamping to more permanent accommodation, such as shepherds' huts, deep in natural environments. This is partly because sturdier structures can be fitted with amenities such as electricity and plumbing, making them attractive to even the most fainthearted glamper.

With proposed laws around short-term lets, which could take holiday homes off the market, treehouses and cabins could also fill that gap.

In the UK, treehouses often evoke a sense of nostalgia, with cultural depictions such as JM Barrie's Peter Pan and the Lost Boys, who made their home in the forests of Neverland. Even Queen Victoria played in the treehouse at the Pitchford estate in Shropshire, which has nestled in the branches of a lime tree in the grounds since the 1600s.

Much of the holiday accommodation plays to this sense of adventure. The Fish hotel in the Cotswolds offers treehouses on the Farncombe estate which can only be accessed by a rope bridge. They have luxurious touches such as double baths on the outside deck and room service.

"The Fish … sits on a 500-acre estate in wonderful countryside and the treehouses make the most of our brilliant setting," said Tom Aspey, the executive general manager.

Dickson owns two Scottish woodland properties – The Treehouses at Lanrick, Perthshire – and also runs Mallett, the specialist design and build company that created the structures. He said building around complex and sensitive tree root systems is particularly difficult. "Part of the fun is to have the trees decide how the design needs to be: their size, shape and location determine everything."

Mechanical engineer Thawley believes his Tree Tent – an orb that dangles from a tree – offers something unique. "It provides more 'fluidity'. Instead of smothering the trees, you are experiencing their majesty and movements.

"You are aware of what's holding you, and gently rocking you, which is an amazing experience. Many campers say they've had the best sleep of their lives."



# As drones fill the sky, Ukraine retakes town one house at a time

Hardened veterans hope new supplies of US rockets will help push Putin's forces back. By *Luke Harding* from near Vovchansk

The two Russian soldiers jogged across an apocalyptic landscape. They kept going, zigzagging over a vegetable patch. At the intersection between Hoholia and Travnia streets, the pair disappeared into a roofless brick building. Around them was the ruined town of Vovchansk. It was a smouldering hell of blackened blocks of flats and shell-dinted cottages.

Vovchansk, once home to about 17,000 people, is approximately three miles (5km) from the border with Russia in north-east Ukraine.

Russian troops seized it on the first day of Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion in February 2022. They retreated six months later, going back up the road to the Russian city of Belgorod. A month ago – on 10 May – they swept in again, taking over the polyclinic and meat processing factory.

A brutal battle has raged ever since. Russian forces control the north of the city and a grid of shattered western districts. Ukrainian troops hold the centre. Their fiefdom includes half of Korelenka Street, with the Russians concealed in nearby basements. Fighting takes place house by house. Vovchansk now resembles a 21st-century mini Stalingrad, a place of death, rattling gunfire and close-quarters combat.

Everything is seen. "The sky is thick with drones. Our drones, their drones," said Sasha, a 34-year-old lieutenant with Ukraine's 57th Separate Motorised Infantry Brigade, while sitting in his HQ, located beyond the city. Neither side was able to use armoured vehicles inside Vovchansk because of kamikaze attacks. He said: "At the start, Russia sent in tanks. We destroyed them all in five minutes. If artillery doesn't get you, drones will."

Instead, small groups of infantry go in on foot. It is a perilous journey, through a wood and across the Vovcha River. Evacuating casualties was very difficult, Sasha said.

The Ukrainian military uses heavy-lift Vampire drones to airdrop supplies to forward posts: water, food, bullets. Clearing abandoned buildings was dangerous, with the enemy waiting in ambush, or just 200 metres away. "You never know when someone will open fire," he said.

A bank of screens showed a live video feed of the city. The two Russians seen jogging earlier were inside their brown cottage. A closeup of the central market – located in a grey zone - presented a gruesome scene. The corpses of six Russian soldiers lay on the ground. "I feel no pity for them. They are constantly trying to take our territory. Russians are zombified people. If we don't halt them, they will continue," Sasha said.

A veteran of the grinding battle for Bakhmut – won by Russia in May 2023 – Sasha said Moscow was guilty of genocide. Wagner mercenaries went into a cellar and murdered a Ukrainian family, including children. "They shot everybody," he said.

*ABOVE*
***Anton and Iryna of the Barracuda drone surveillance group.***
*Photographs by Jędrzej Nowicki/ the Observer*

Street battles in Vovchansk were so intense that only experienced Ukrainian soldiers were deployed there, rotating among themselves in shifts. The Russians were a mixture of professionals and novices, he added.

The 57th scrambled to Vovchansk last month. The brigade's commander, Maj Yuriy, said his men had pushed the Russians back and stabilised the situation. "A couple of days ago we stopped their advance here. Our task is to hold our positions and to inflict maximum losses. And then to gradually move forward," he said. The Russians would typically attack about 7pm or 8pm, creeping forward as dusk fell.

Ukraine's biggest challenge is Russian air power. Last week, enemy combat planes dropped 36 guided bombs known as KABs in a 24 hour-period. Strikes were more frequent near the occupied eastern city of Avdiivka,

Sasha said. "If we had air defences to shoot down Russian bombers, the situation would have changed a long time ago. We wouldn't be defending. We would be attacking," he pointed out.

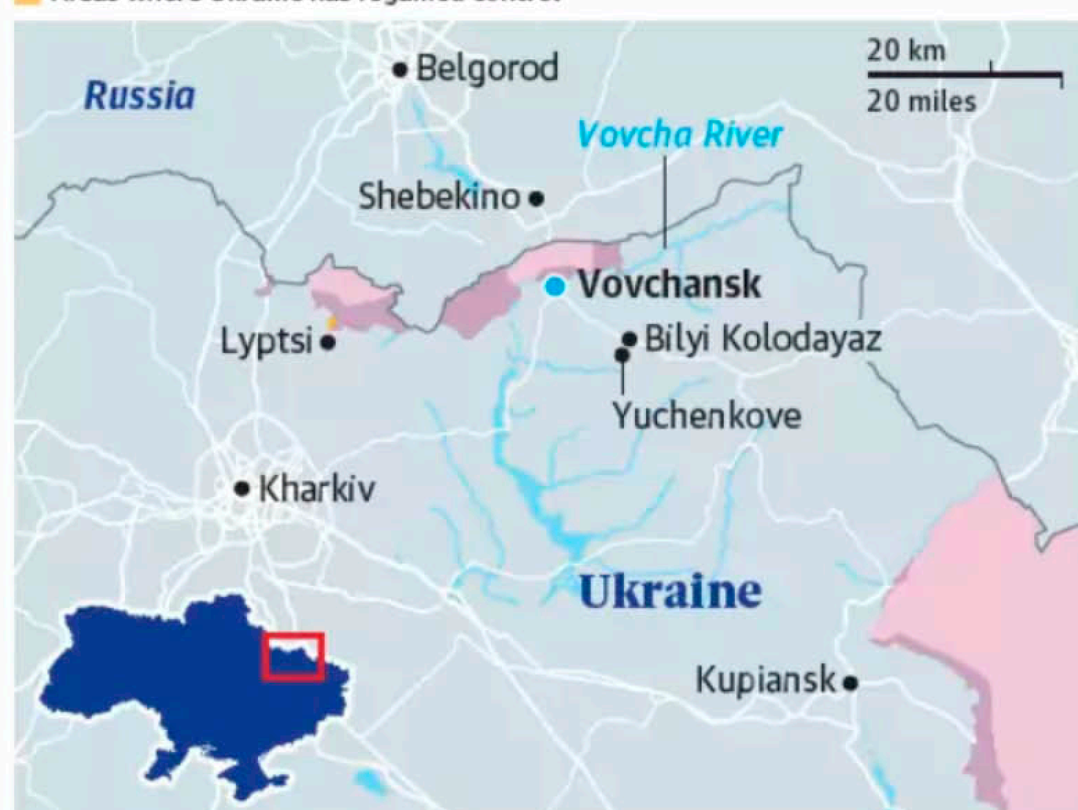
As well as Vovchansk, Russia has advanced towards the village of Lyptsi. Its two-pronged incursion piles pressure on Ukraine's second city, Kharkiv, almost 19 miles away.

The Kremlin's goal is to bring its big guns to within shelling range of Kharkiv in order to inflict daily misery on its 1 million-strong population – a repeat of 2022. An additional objective is to capture a road connecting Vovchansk to the city of Kupiansk, where Russian troops are closing in.

**Hunter Biden's firearms trial**
A dilemma for the GOP and conservative media
Page 28

**If you can't beat 'em, eat 'em**
Italy's chefs put crab invaders on the menu
Page 32





Source: Institute for the Study of War with AEI's Critical Threats Project

*ABOVE A shattered building in Buhaivka, a village near the city of Vovchansk.*

The latest Vovchansk offensive has forced Kyiv to divert forces from other parts of the frontline. Putin, though, might have miscalculated. With Kharkiv in peril, the Biden administration last month lifted its prohibition on the use of some US weapons inside Russian territory.

European allies followed suit, but White House restrictions on long-range ballistic missiles – which may knock out Russian military aerodromes – remain.

On Thursday, Joe Biden – attending D-day celebrations – reaffirmed US support for Ukraine and described Putin as a "tyrant bent on domination". The US president, however, made clear that Kyiv could not strike Moscow or the Kremlin. It was allowed to attack "just across the border where they're receiving significant fire from conventional weapons used by the Russians to go into Ukraine to kill Ukrainians", Biden said.

Still, this local change helps. Previously, Russia amassed soldiers between about nine and 19 miles away from the Vovchansk district, beyond the range of Ukrainian drones. Ihor, a volunteer with the Barracuda drone surveillance group, said the invaders parked their armoured vehicles in an old Soviet collective farm and used the Russian town of Shebekino as a staging post. "Their logistics are now more difficult," he said. "The new rule might be a gamechanger."

On 1 June or the following day, Kyiv used a US-supplied Himars rocket system to destroy a Russian S-300/400 missile complex close to Belgorod. Images showed two wrecked launchers and a damaged command post.

Sasha said he would only call in a Himars strike if he could be certain to kill "20-30" Russians. "American

*Continued on page 27* »

# *Under the banyan tree, students lose their fear as Modi's spell is broken*

## Notebook ... Delhi

*Hannah Ellis-Petersen*

In the leafy surrounds of Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), a pocket of students sat beneath a banyan tree engaged in impassioned evening conversation. As usual, it was about politics – but this time the mood was different.

"For the first time in a decade, we have hope," said Antariksh Sharma, who is doing his PhD in the arts. "It is like a sweet cold breeze amid a heatwave."

Last week, India's election results sent reverberations through the country after Narendra Modi, the strongman prime minister whose authoritarian, Hindu nationalist agenda had come to seem like India's inevitable trajectory, lost his parliamentary majority for the first time in 10 years.

His Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) will still return to power, with Modi sworn in for a historic third term tonight, but it will be reliant on coalition partners for the first time and will no longer enjoy the supermajority that has propelled its agenda since 2014.

Among analysts, the spell of invincibility around Modi was widely described as being broken and many believe the BJP will no longer be able to implement some of its more hardline policies.

For India's liberals, who have long cautioned about an erosion of the nation's democracy and its secular foundations since Modi came to power, it was celebrated as a moment of great reprieve.

Few had believed that India's democracy was still resilient enough to stand up against Modi, who is accused of centralising power and bringing institutions and agencies of the state fully under his control, as well as using religious majoritarianism to win votes in the Hindu-majority country.

At JNU, in the heart of the capital, this election was deeply personal for many students, who saw the future of their university at stake.

Once seen as a bastion of India's radical leftwing movements and protest, JNU has, since Modi came to power, become a focal point



*Students at Jawaharlal Nehru University discuss India's election results.* Aakash Hassan/the Observer

of sustained attacks by the right, which views it as a seething pit of "anti-India" activity.

The BJP has repeatedly accused the public university of being a stronghold of "urban naxals", a derogatory term for leftwing activists that was repeatedly deployed by Modi on the campaign trail.

The BJP government, notoriously intolerant of dissent, stands accused of appointing stooges to senior positions and influencing the curriculum to align with its political agenda, while professors who criticised the government allegedly had their promotions blocked.

Several JNU students who took part in anti-government protests in 2020 were arbitrarily detained under draconian terrorism laws, and one former research scholar, Umar Khalid, still remains behind bars, deemed by rights groups to be a political prisoner.

PhD student Sharma was among hundreds from JNU who took buses across the country to campaign for the opposition, spending 10 days in the eastern states of Bihar and Jharkhand in an attempt to protect the country's constitutional values.

Other students had gone out across Delhi, distributing opposition leaflets, putting up posters and even performing street plays about the issues at stake.

"People on our campus were being targeted by the BJP," said Sharma. "But in recent days we feel we can talk more freely now and discuss things. There is less fear of getting attacked or labelled as anti-national, so we have already felt the impact."

Just prior to the election, Bollywood – India's vast Hindi film industry, which has increasingly become cowed by the government – released *JNU: Jahangir National University*, a movie about a campus where "leftists are waging love jihad", a debunked conspiracy theory against Muslims, and "urban naxals are trying to divide the country". Few were in doubt who the film was targeting.

Many JNU students claimed that over the past few years, rightwing student groups had increasingly been allowed to carry out violence on campus with impunity, particularly targeting minorities and Dalits, India's most marginalised caste.

Meanwhile, restrictions have been put on student protests on campus, and when a group tried to broadcast a BBC documentary deemed critical of Modi, the administration cut the power. "This campus has been under attack since the BJP government came to power," said Kunal Kumar, 26, a PhD student from Bihar. "We were afraid to even identify outside as JNU students because of the kind of propaganda spread against the university. We were being labelled as anti-national."

Yet on Tuesday, as the results rolled in, the mood had been jubilant among many, Kumar said, and a celebratory march took place on Thursday across the campus.

"There has been a change in mood in the campus since the results came out," he said. "We are reclaiming our campus."

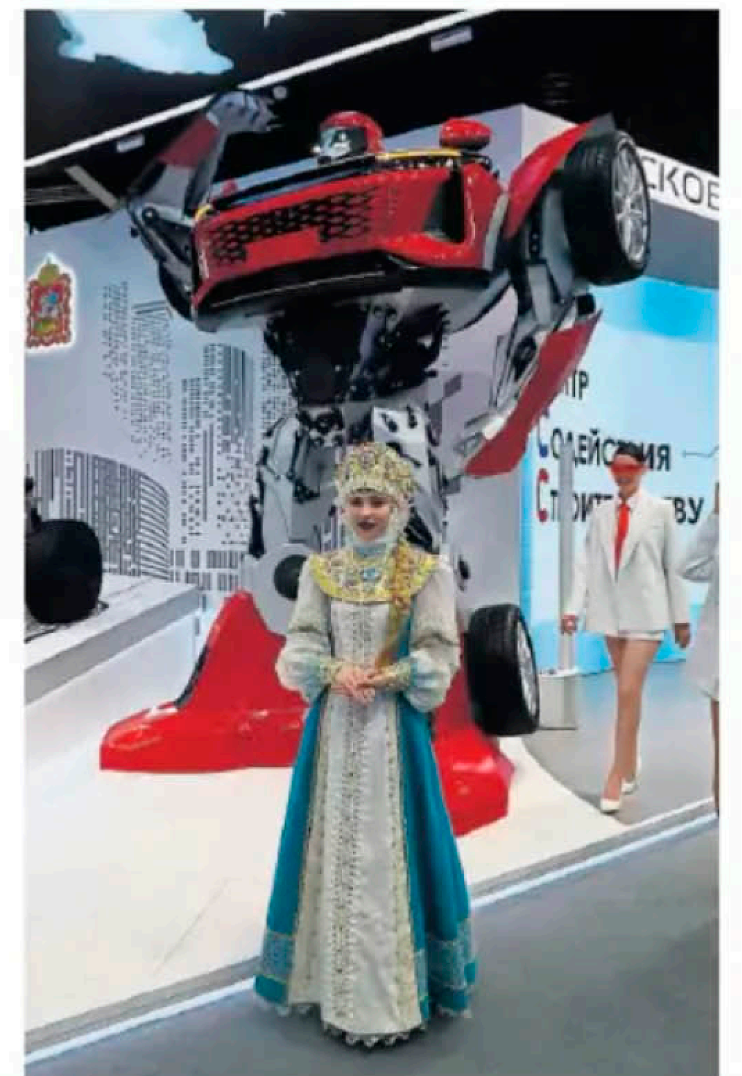
*Additional reporting by Aakash Hassan*

# Putin's girls and anti-western hawks rule at this year's 'Russian Davos'

St Petersburg summit hails good news on the economy as children of elite step into spotlight

Pjotr Sauer



At Vladimir Putin's premier economic forum, dubbed the "Russian Davos" and held each year in the president's home town of St Petersburg, two women spoke at length. Their identities were an open secret, yet no one dared utter it aloud: they were Putin's adult daughters.

The older daughter, Maria Vorontsova, 39, a scientist specialising in genetic research, chaired a discussion at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) on "Bioeconomics".

The same day, Katerina Tikhonova, 37, a tech executive and dancer of acrobatic rock'n'roll, spoke proudly about the defence industry's role in ensuring Russia's technological sovereignty.

The identities of Putin's daughters from his marriage to Lyudmila Putina, a former Aeroflot steward whom he divorced in 2013, have never been confirmed by the Kremlin, and no photographs of them as adults have been officially released. Despite their growing influence and the fact that they have been sanctioned by the west, Putin has never publicly acknowledged them as his daughters. Once asked by reporters, he simply referred to them as "these women".

Their names were also conspicuously absent from a detailed Putin family tree presented to the public at SPIEF 2024. The display, held on a stand which guests could take pictures next to, traced the president's lineage back to the 17th-century Time of Troubles, revealing his humble origins from a peasant family.

But the two women's rising public profiles indicate a broader trend: the children of Putin and his allies are increasingly assuming positions in business and government, suggesting that their ageing parents are working to secure a steady transition of power and influence.




*Scenes from St Petersburg. Below, a Putin jacket labelled 'invincible'. Anatoly Maltsev/EPA*

There was Ksenia Shoigu, the daughter of former defence minister and current security council secretary Sergei Shoigu, who chaired a discussion on the country's triathlon federation, which she heads.

Roman Rotenberg, a senior ice hockey executive whose father, Boris, was among Putin's childhood judo partners, also spoke, somewhat ironically rallying against what he called "nepotism in sport".

In a recent report entitled Politburo 2.0, a nod to the former Soviet Union's system of government, Yevgeny Minchenko, a political scientist close to the Kremlin, described this process as the "rise of the princess".

This year was a far cry from the forum before the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 when multinationals and Russian companies would vie for expensive partnerships or hold flashy parties featuring pop stars, including Sting, to prove they were committed to the Russian market.

Among its speakers, SPIEF once boasted world leaders such as French president Emmanuel Macron, Chinese leader Xi Jinping, and former German chancellor Angela Merkel.

To replace western delegations, Russia has courted officials from South America, Africa, India and China. President Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe and Bolivian President Luis Arce were this year's guests of honour.

A delegation from the Taliban also attended, despite the organisation being formally banned in Russia.

Discussions on enhancing cooperation with the west now belong to the past, supplanted by lectures from far-right activists, including philosopher Alexander Dugin, who passionately advocated total war. Other officials called for the elimination of the "LGBT movement".

On sale at the conference were T-shirts printed with a combative phrase attributed to Putin: "If a fight is inevitable, throw the first punch."

In a sign of the times, the hawkish Russian political scientist Sergei Karaganov, who recently advocated a preemptive nuclear strike, was chosen to moderate the closing ceremony traditionally headlined by Putin.

Still, some participants said the mood at the summit was optimistic, buoyed up by a positive economic outlook. Despite being the most heavily sanctioned country in the world, Russia's economy is forecast to grow faster than most other advanced economies, according to the International Monetary Fund – highlighting the country's surprising resilience and raising questions over the effectiveness of sanction policies.

Russia's oil and gas revenue in April almost doubled year on year to £11bn thanks to rising prices, underscoring the difficulties countries in the west face as they seek to limit the Kremlin's income and stifle its military might.

"There is a clear optimism felt this year compared with 2023," said an official at a state financial institution, who was attending SPIEF for the third time. "A sense of pride is in the air that we have defeated the west's economic war."

When a visibly confident Putin gave his plenary speech on Friday, he promised the audience a victory in Ukraine and touted the country's economic growth.

"Despite all the obstacles and illegitimate sanctions, Russia remains one of the key participants in world trade," he said.

# Ukraine hopes American rockets can turn the tide in its favour

» Continued from page 24

rockets are expensive," he added. More US weapons were arriving after Congress in April passed a $61bn military aid package, he said.

When the battle for Vovchansk began, thousands of residents fled the city. Some exited in private cars, others went on evacuation buses. A few left it too late.

Oleksandr Humaniuk, founder of the Rose in Hand charity, said he received desperate phone calls from 10 families living in basements in Russian-occupied streets. Rescue was impossible. A disabled man called him and said he wanted to get out but could only walk 50 metres.

"We also have calls from people where it's a trap. A few locals support the Russians. They try and lure police in so the Russians shoot them," Humaniuk said.

He said Russian soldiers kidnapped an unknown number of civilians, using them as a human shields and taking them across the border. They murdered others. Bodies lay in the streets. A man in a wheelchair was killed outside his house. Two volunteers and a policeman died trying to help civilians, he said.

Villagers living in the nearby countryside have also escaped. Oleksandr Lubianko said he was the last person to leave his hamlet home in Yuchenkove, west of Vovchansk. He said he packed a single suitcase and set off across the fields, eventually coming across a Ukrainian soldier.

Lubianko said he had been feeding his neighbours' goats, chickens and ducks. "I was sad to abandon them. Who knows if they will survive. The goat looked at me reproachfully."

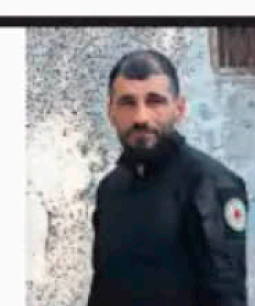
His sister Nataliia Hrybenkova left the nearby village of Bilyi Kolodayaz. She described Russia's occupation two years ago as "bearable". "Masked gunmen came round and stole my husband's Toyota car," she recalled. "You were not allowed to speak Ukrainian. But if you kept your head down, it was OK."

Russia's latest bloody attack was much worse. "There is bombing all the time. There are airstrikes every day," she said.

Valentina – who declined to give her surname – said she got out of Vovchansk in a car with her husband, daughter Anya and six-year-old grandson. They hid for several hours, before fleeing under gunfire.

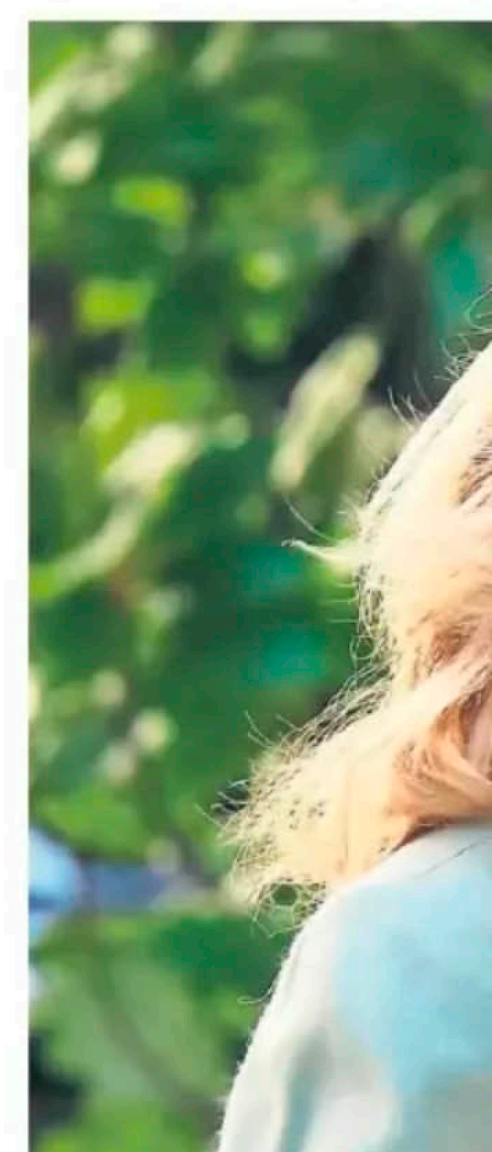
"We saw planes and heard bombs. We crossed ourselves and hoped for the best," she said. Her daughter, a nurse, helped evacuate patients from the hospital. Soon afterwards, Russian soldiers stormed the building and set up on observation point in a medical department with a tower across the road.

What would happen now? "We don't know," Valentina said. "All I can tell you is the Russians thought it would be easy to take Vovchansk. They were wrong. Ukraine is fighting back."



*Oleksandr Humaniuk had received desperate calls for help.*





# Republicans tie themselves in knots in bid to weaponise firearms trial of president's son

The prosecution of Hunter Biden – on laws that Trump's party wants loosened – contradicts attempts by ex-president to portray justice system as rigged

**Robert Tait**
*Washington*

A picture of criminal behaviour and a dissolute lifestyle was painted in sometimes painfully frank testimony in a Delaware courtroom last week and would have been difficult to take for the family of any defendant.

But Hunter Biden, the man in the dock in Wilmington, is no ordinary plaintiff. He is the son of the president of the United States.

Biden Jr, 54, went on trial last Monday facing three federal charges relating to the illegal purchase and ownership of a gun while in the grip of longstanding drug addiction.

All week long, the proceedings put the personal conduct of the eldest surviving presidential child under a microscope.

A jury in his home town heard details of his previous addiction to crack cocaine and how, in 2018 – with his father preparing for a run for the presidency – he bought a handgun by allegedly lying to a registered firearms dealer about his drug use. He then desperately tried to retrieve it from a rubbish bin where his then lover, the widow of Joe Biden's other son, Beau, who died in 2015, had dumped it in panic.

The trial will continue this week, when Hunter's lawyer, Abbe Lowell, will make his defence. Yet already, the details of a president's son gone astray should be manna in an election year for Republicans, who focused for years on Hunter Biden's business interests and alleged wrongdoing in an effort to politically discredit his father.

Instead, the trial has presented Republicans with an awkward dilemma. The fact that it is taking place at all undermines the now dominant narrative – dictated by Donald Trump and parroted in unison by his staunchest Republican supporters – of a Department of Justice (DoJ) weaponised by the Biden administration to pursue his political opponents, Trump chief among them.

Trump, the former president and presumptive 2024 Republican nominee, amplified the claim after his recent conviction on 34 charges of falsifying documents to hide paying hush money payments to Stormy Daniels, the adult film actor, to help him win the 2016 presidential election.

Yet Trump's conviction was the result of a New York state prosecution by Manhattan district attorney Alvin Bragg, who does not work under the DoJ – while Hunter Biden's is a federal prosecution brought by the department that is formally part of his father's administration.

"The fact that the DoJ is pursuing Hunter Biden shows you that the Trump argument of a weaponised Department of Justice is a raging lie," said Rick Wilson, co-founder of the Lincoln Project, a group of anti-Trump former Republicans.

"It makes their base feel happy or excited, but it doesn't move anybody else [with] the idea of Joe Biden being this criminal mastermind who was protecting his son. It just doesn't hold up because Joe Biden says, 'I love my child, but I'm not going to interfere with the case because it's inappropriate.'"

> *'This is a story that contradicts a central political point for the Republicans – that guns ought to be more available'*
> *Prof Larry Jacobs*

Joe Biden, who was in France marking the anniversary of the D-day landings, confirmed last week that he would not pardon Hunter if he was convicted. If found guilty, he faces up to 25 years in jail, although such a sentence is highly unlikely for a non-violent first offender.

If the president's no-pardon vow highlighted one awkward fit for Republicans trying to project Trump's imagery of "crooked Joe" and "the Biden crime family", another was presented by the fact that the main accusation against Hunter is concerned with breaches of gun laws, which the GOP favours keeping as loose as possible, contrasting with Democrats' pleas for tighter controls.

As Hunter stood trial for transgressing federal gun background regulations, the Republican-led House of Representatives narrowly passed a measure last week that would





*Clockwise from far left, Hunter Biden and wife Melissa at court; father and son on a recent bike ride; and Jill Biden at court. AP, Reuters*

exempt military veterans who had been reported to the FBI over mental health concerns from being on the register for such checks.

Larry Jacobs, a professor of politics at the University of Minnesota, said the contradiction exposed an irrationality at the heart of the Republican argument.

"This is a story that contradicts a central political agenda point for the Republicans – namely, that guns ought to be more readily available," he said.

"And here Hunter Biden is getting a gun and he's being prosecuted for it. Rather than the right standing up and saying, this is false prosecution, it shows the overzealousness of the justice system. They're so locked into a kind of Biden hate that they can't think straight."

Far from focusing on the case's merits, segments of the Trump-cheering media have contrived to put a sinister gloss on the public support that Joe Biden and his wife, Jill – who attended the trial for several days last week – have given Hunter.

When a photo circulated of the president and Hunter on a bike ride last weekend, Greg Gutfeld, a Fox News host, speculated that Joe Biden was subliminally warning jurors.

"That photo is a message. It's Delaware for: remember, jurors, I'm the president and I can always call the IRS," Gutfeld told viewers.

Fox's legal analyst, Jeanine Pirro, accused Jill Biden of "using a mob tactic" by appearing in court, saying it was meant to intimidate the jury, according to Media Matters for America, a monitoring group that has compiled a list of conservative media soundbites on the trial. It showed a trend of commentators trying to depict Joe and Jill Biden as subtly interfering in the proceedings.

Some GOP politicians have picked up that theme. Ted Cruz, the right-wing Republican senator for Texas, suggested on his podcast that the president had engaged in "witness tampering" by recently visiting the home of Hallie Biden, Beau's widow, who last week testified as a witness for the prosecution.

> ***'I'm not aware of any instance where a difficult child actually hurt any president at the polls'***
> *John Zogby, pollster*

Matt Gertz, a senior fellow at Media Matters for America, said the sniping was aimed at preparing for a possible acquittal. "Therefore, they sort of create some sort of explanation that fits in with their broader narrative," he said. He added that the narrative depicted a justice system that punished Republicans while letting Democrats off scot-free.

While early polling evidence shows that Trump's recent conviction may have handed a marginal but potentially vital advantage to Joe Biden – particularly among non-aligned independent voters – there is little to suggest that a Hunter Biden conviction would work in the opposite direction.

"It doesn't seem to be connecting at all," said John Zogby, a veteran pollster and historian. "As far as independents are concerned, I just don't know that you hear any real buzz about Hunter.

"Another element here is that it is the president's son, as opposed to the president himself, that's on trial. And having taught history for almost a quarter of century, I'm not aware of any instance where a difficult child, or a difficult sibling or a difficult wife actually hurt any president [at the polls]."



*BELOW Donald Trump at his recent trial. He has consistently claimed that the justice system had being rigged against him by Joe Biden.*

# Thousands gather in support of former ally standing against Orbán

## Péter Magyar's Tisza party trails populist Hungarian leader, but offers liberal voters hope in key elections

**Lili Bayer**
*Budapest*

Thousands of people rallied in Budapest yesterday as a political newcomer led a push to mobilise voters against Hungary's populist prime minister, Viktor Orbán, before European elections today.

"We defeated apathy," declared Péter Magyar, a former government insider who switched sides and launched an opposition movement, as he stood in front of a vast crowd which filled the capital's Heroes' Square.

"We give hope to each other," he said, underscoring that "we are building a country where there is no right, no left – only Hungarian".

Since coming back to power 14 years ago, Orbán has consolidated his position. He has cultivated relationships with Russia and China, as well as far-right parties across the globe. And he has described Brussels and Washington as his adversaries, despite Hungary's continued membership of the EU and Nato.

At the same time, some of the prime minister's closest friends and family members are now among the country's wealthiest people, amid allegations of widespread cronyism.

Magyar, who used to be married to Orbán's former justice minister, became a sensation in Hungary earlier this year when he broke ranks and began criticising the government, stressing concerns about alleged corruption.

The Hungarian government has repeatedly rejected accusations of corruption.

But gathered on a hot afternoon, many in the crowd expressed admiration for Magyar's message and his personal journey.

"He took responsibility for his sins and stood up," said Zoltán, an activist supporting Magyar's Tisza party.

Lena, a 17-year-old Hungarian who lives in Austria but wants to move home, said she will vote for Magyar once she is old enough. "I believe we need to take back our homeland," she said.

While Hungarians will be voting in local elections and on who to send to represent them in the European parliament, many see these elections as a de facto referendum on both Orbán and the opposition parties that have struggled to challenge his position over recent years.

Orbán, who is the EU's most Kremlin-friendly leader, has focused his election campaign on what he has described as a "peace" platform.

Ahead of the elections, the ruling Fidesz party has run an intense disinformation campaign claiming – without providing proof – that there is a global conspiracy to force Hungary into a direct war with Russia and that Hungary's opposition is being directed by the west to undermine the national interest.

"Now we are again receiving demands to take part in a new war," Orbán told supporters at a recent rally.

Addressing the crowd, Magyar pushed back against this narrative and accused the government of intentionally dividing Hungarian society.

"The Tisza party is the party of peace – the real party of peace," he said.

Magyar is an unusual figure in the Hungarian political scene. His language sometimes echoes conservative and nationalist rhetoric, but he also criticises Orbán's government in a way that appeals to liberal voters.

In an interview with the *Guardian* earlier in the campaign, Magyar said his aim was to be in the centre. "I have a vision about Hungary," he said.

The political newcomer's informal style, social media savvy, and willingness to criticise rightwing and leftwing politicians has resonated with many voters.

**ON OTHER PAGES**
In thrall to Orbán and the hard right, Europe faces its moment of truth
Simon Tisdall, page 49

However, critics have raised concerns that he has weakened other opposition forces and questioned how different some of his policies would be from the current ruling party.

"What is completely new is that he can speak essentially to the whole left-liberal side and also a significant segment of Fidesz voters," said Róbert László, an election expert at the Budapest-based Political Capital Institute.

Magyar "comes from the inside, he speaks in a way that appeals to everybody, he has work ethic. And the fourth factor is that he is not open to compromise," he added.

But he stressed that despite an initial decline, Fidesz has performed strongly in opinion polls over the past weeks.

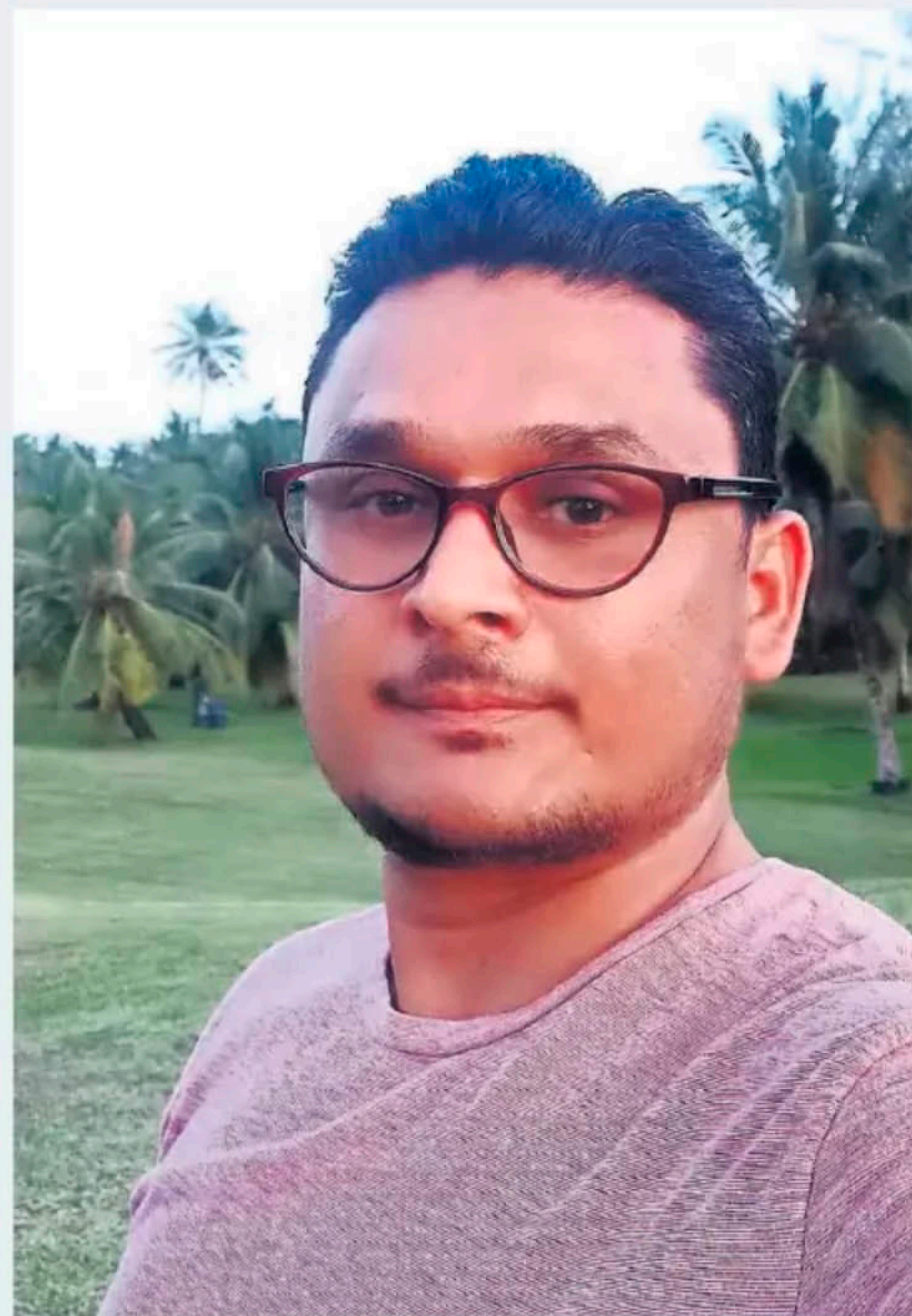
The ruling party enjoys the support of 50% of decided voters, according to a study published last week by pollster Medián. Magyar's Tisza party, meanwhile, stood at 27%.

"Magyar's appearance means a serious threat for everyone: obviously now much more for the opposition parties than for Fidesz," László said, before adding: "We don't expect that Orbán will be packing his bags on 10 June."

# Military base migrant workers fear for their safety after deaths on Diego Garcia

A Filipino worker died before a medevac flight arrived and an Indian man suffered a fatal case of sepsis. Now US defence contractor on island faces questions. By Katie McQue







*ABOVE LEFT Relemay Fabula Gan was sick for several weeks before her death in January.*

*ABOVE Saddam Ali died while working for KBR at the US navy support facility on Diego Garcia.*

*LEFT Diego Garcia atoll from a satellite.* Getty Images

Migrant workers employed by the US defence contractor KBR on the British-owned island of Diego Garcia have expressed concerns for their safety after the recent deaths of two of their colleagues, the *Observer* has learned.

The most recent death on Diego Garcia, which is host to a strategic American military base in the British Indian Ocean Territory, came on 5 January. Relemay Fabula Gan, 41, from the Philippines, died after suffering a collapsed lung following several weeks of illness after a Covid diagnosis, her family said.

Diego Garcia does not have a hospital-grade health facility; workers and military personnel who become seriously ill on the island are typically airlifted to a hospital in Singapore.

Gan had been sick for several weeks on the base before her death. Her family and colleagues believe she could have been saved if she had been taken off the island for treatment. The family said Gan had no underlying health conditions and was an award-winning amateur cyclist.

KBR said that Gan's death was a tragedy. In a statement, it highlighted that she died after being sent to the US military clinic on Diego Garcia for medical care.

"We requested a medevac for her the same day the military doctor requested it. There was no delay in ordering the medevac once KBR received the request from the military doctor," a KBR spokesperson said. "All of the medical resources available on Diego Garcia were used to try to prevent the tragic loss of Ms Gan."

Gan died several hours before the medevac – medical evacuation – flight landed. The situation has led to fears among workers that their lives could be at risk if they suffer a medical emergency.

KBR, previously known as Kellogg Brown & Root, is the main contractor for the base, where it employs about 1,200 workers from the Philippines, India, Kenya and Mauritius.

An *Observer* investigation in November revealed the death of Saddam Ali, 33, an Indian employee of KBR at the base. His body was held on the island for seven weeks before being repatriated to his family in Delhi.

The family were given Ali's autopsy report in March. It revealed that he died from sepsis, which had developed after he contracted a bacterial infection – most likely caused by an insect bite – on a trip home to India.




The day before he died, military doctors attempted to place Ali on a portable ventilator, but it "would not function correctly to deliver the required pressure support", according to the autopsy report, which the *Observer* has seen.

Ali was pronounced dead on 18 October, after suffering three cardiac arrests within 12 hours. In a statement, a company spokesperson said that Ali was under the care of the military clinic when he died, adding: "KBR did all that it could to assist the family in this difficult and tragic time". The US Department of Defense did not respond to a request for comment.

Migrant workers recruited for jobs in Diego Garcia are not given formal work visas for their jobs on the island. When they are hired, KBR provides Indian recruits with flights and tourist visas to Bahrain and it then flies them from there to Diego Garcia on a military flight, according to several workers interviewed.

"We are telling lies to the Indian immigration authorities that we are going to visit Bahrain. We are hiding from the Indian government where we work," one Indian worker said. "If I told the truth to the immigration authorities, they would not allow us to travel because there is no visa in our hands."

> **'We are telling Indian immigration that we are going to Bahrain ... we are hiding where we work'**
> *Indian worker, Diego Garcia*

A KBR spokesperson said that all employees on Diego Garcia "have the documentation and government authorisations required for them to work on the base. We follow applicable laws and regulations to employ people on Diego Garcia".

Workers said that KBR employees who become ill are typically airlifted to a designated hospital in Singapore. Indian workers require a visa to enter the country. Some Indian workers are worried they do not have the necessary documentation to be quickly evacuated to other countries in medical emergencies, they said.

A KBR spokesperson said: "Singapore issues emergency visas for emergency medical matters, and it is only one of several locations where Diego Garcia employees can be medevacked."

The company did not respond to questions about how long it would take to secure a Singaporean visa for a sick worker.

"In general, while waiting on an answer from Singapore or any other country, we do everything in our power to identify the fastest option," the spokesperson said. "All of KBR's Diego Garcia employees from India, Kenya and elsewhere have the documentation and government authorisations required for them to work on the base."

KBR began recruiting Kenyan and Indian workers for Diego Garcia in 2022. Some of these workers allege they had been charged recruitment fees of up to $1,500 (£1,200) for their jobs by brokers in their home countries.

They claimed that a Kenyan broker demanded that workers pay this fee in instalments from their monthly salaries after they began work on the island. The broker placed his wife in a KBR job on Diego Garcia to further intimidate them into repaying, several workers said.

KBR launched an investigation after the *Observer* approached it in January with allegations that employees had paid to get their jobs.

"We completed our investigation into this matter and have taken corrective action," said the spokesperson. "We have zero tolerance for labour trafficking of any kind, including the payment of recruiting fees, and we always strive to operate with integrity in accordance with our values."

As a result of KBR's investigation, the broker's wife has been dismissed from her job and removed from Diego Garcia. Some Kenyan workers said they were too scared to return home for holidays because of threats and intimidation from the angered recruitment broker.

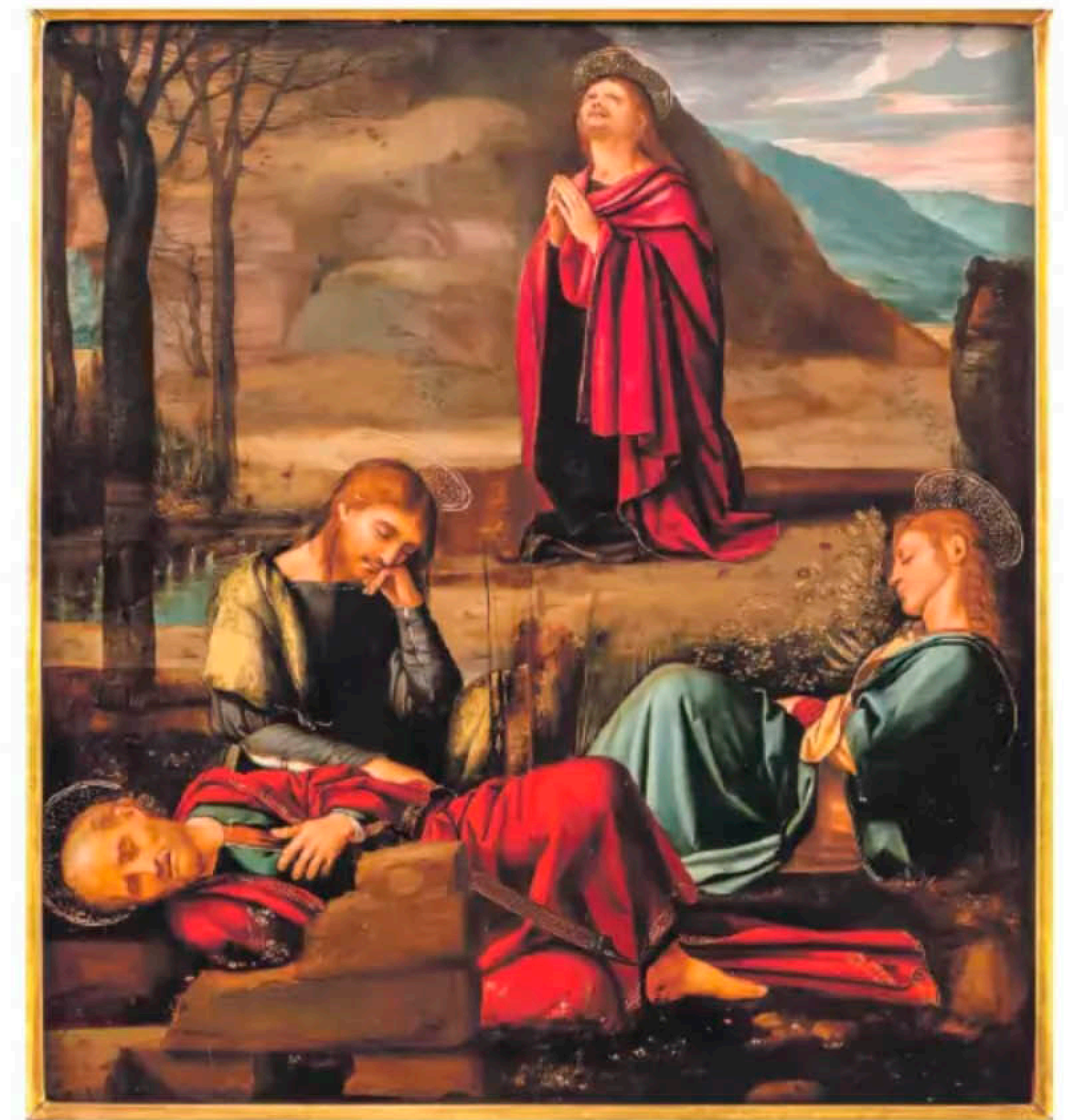
"He threatened me and said 'I'll kill you' if I talk about it," said one worker, who provided transaction records, text messages and emails to verify their account.



*LEFT Juan de Juanes's painting of Christ tied to a pillar is the focal point of the exhibition.*

*BELOW Also by Juan de Juanes is the Holy Family with San Juanito and Santa María Magdalene.*





*ABOVE Prayer in the Garden by Fernando Yáñez de la Almedina is also in the Alba de Tormes show.*

# Left-behind Spanish town defies 'cultural gravity' to stage a Renaissance coup

## Major exhibition in Alba de Tormes aims to break stranglehold of Madrid and Barcelona

**Sam Jones**
*Alba de Tormes*

In an elegant but unfinished basilica 100 miles from Madrid as the crow – or in this case the stork – flies, some of the hidden and long-dispersed religious treasures of the Spanish Renaissance have been gathered together for an unlikely and potentially pioneering exhibition.

Although Alba de Tormes has a rich and turbulent history – it is home to both the illustrious House of Alba and the majority of the remains of St Teresa of Ávila – the small and picturesque town in Castilla y León is not a habitual venue for the kind of art show more commonly staged in Madrid or Barcelona.

The exhibition, The Splendour of Painting in Valencia, is hoping to change that and to help rebalance Spain's cultural geography.

If the aesthetic aim is to share 120 pieces that illustrate how the arrival of Italian and Flemish art in Valencia fuelled and influenced the Renaissance in Spain, its parallel goal is to bring cultural events to parts of the country that are all too often neglected and under-appreciated.

"The idea came about because we really wanted to bring art to places where such important works have never been shown," says Nicolás Cortés, a 30-year veteran of the art world who is one of the promoters of the project.

"But it's also about the environment. We want people to come to beautiful places like this so they can get to know them. History-wise, Alba de Tormes is just amazing: St Teresa of Ávila; Saint John of the Cross, the Duke of Alba. It was like the second royal court of Spain in the 16th century when it came to painters and artists, all of whom gathered around the duke."

Today, Alba de Tormes is a little quieter. Swallows hurl themselves through the blue sky high above the stork nests that stud the ancient towers while, far below, the River Tormes flows under a medieval bridge.




> *'We want to change the circuits so people don't just see things in Madrid, Barcelona, Seville or Valencia'*
> **José Gómez Frechina, curator**

Despite being only two hours' drive from Madrid, and half an hour from the university city of Salamanca, the town sits in a province whose rural reaches are suffering the slow ravages of depopulation seen across much of what is known as *la España vaciada*, or "the hollowed-out Spain". As well as the challenges of urbanisation, unemployment, demographic shifts and a lack of services, *la España vaciada* is often overlooked when it comes to culture.

"We want to bring people to *la España vaciada*," says José Gómez Frechina, the exhibition's curator and an expert on Valencian art. "We want to change the circuits so that people don't just see things like this in Madrid, Barcelona, Seville or Valencia."

Gómez Frechina believes that the show's exhibits – 90% of which have never been on public display – will draw visitors and help celebrate the pivotal role Valencia played in the history of Spanish art.

The exhibition's focal point is Juan de Juanes's painting of Christ tied to a pillar, a work widely regarded as one of the greatest achievements of the Spanish Renaissance. In a booth nearby, an immersive video take on the painting brings it eerily to life as Christ stares from the screen and moves his agonised body, tilting his thorn-crowned head and lifting his bound wrists.

Around it, paintings loaned by private collectors – many of them altarpiece panels – chronicle the foreign influences that shaped art in Valencia and made the eastern city an artistic powerhouse.

"In Spanish terms, between 1400 and 1550, Valencia was like the Paris or the Milan of the time," says Gómez Frechina. "It was home to the greatest cultural splendour of the time – literary, social and economic. Then Philip II establishes Madrid as the capital, with El Escorial, and Spain changes."

Valencia, he adds, became an intellectual and artistic gateway thanks to its location as the port that linked Spain to Rome, Naples and Flanders. The infamous Valencian nobleman Rodrigo de Borja – better known as Rodrigo Borgia, who became Pope Alexander VI – was as keen on art as he was on womanising. The future pope brought the great Italian painter Paolo de San Leocadio to Spain, where he painted pieces including the magnificent ceiling frescoes in Valencia cathedral that were rediscovered 20 years ago.

Three of the artist's works feature in the exhibition, as do paintings by Fernando Llanos and Fernando Yáñez de la Almedina, two Spanish masters who are thought to have worked alongside Leonardo Da Vinci in Florence, and who painted part of the cathedral's main altarpiece.

The arrival in Valencia of foreign works, artists and styles, says Gómez Frechina, "struck the city like a bolt of lightning, illuminating the way for all the painters there".

The curator and Cortés hope their exhibition will prove similarly catalytic. "You don't normally get something like this round here," says Cortés, who fell in love with Alba de Tormes 20 years ago.

Cortés wants people to come to the town to enjoy its sites, its hospitality and the natural riches that surround it, from the river to the storks and the golden eagles and wolves that inhabit the landscape.

"In the future, we want to use projects like this to get people into nature – and to see the incredibly strong relationship between nature and art," he says.

"It'll take a long time but I think it'll go very well. At the end of the day, art is about bringing people closer to beauty."

Everything, however, will depend on how many people kick themselves free of the cultural gravity of Spain's biggest cities and strike out for somewhere unassuming to see something unprecedented.

"We've kind of landed here like a meteorite," says Gómez Frechina. "And now we need word of the meteorite to spread."

# If you can't beat 'em, eat 'em: Italians dine out on invader crabs

Blue crabs are putting prized shellfish stocks at risk. But now chefs have a creative solution

**Ismail Einashe**
*Catania, Sicily*

In a down-to-earth suburb of Catania on Sicily's east coast, smoke billows from street stands selling traditional grilled horse meat, and local youngsters gather around kiosks offering the region's handmade drink seltz limone e sale (sparkling water with lemon and sea salt). It is here that a family of charismatic former fishers have opened a seafood restaurant that bravely challenges long-held regional conventions.

The Salamone family sell all the usual local specialities in their slick new business La Fish, such as Sicily's swordfish, sardines and tuna. However, the feature of tonight's tasting menu – attracting customers who range from local families to food connoisseurs – is a relative newcomer to these shores and to Sicilian tables: the Atlantic blue crab.

Inside the restaurant, about half a dozen blue crabs are displayed on a large fish counter alongside an array of other seafood. These crabs, with their striking blue claws and olive-green shells, are creating a crisis for Italy. Originating from the western Atlantic, they have no natural predators in the Mediterranean and feed on young clams, disrupting traditional shellfish harvests and affecting Italy's position as one of the top clam producers in the world.

So some Italians, such as the Salamones, have adapted by incorporating these crustaceans into their cuisine.

"I love the blue crab," says chef Mario Contadino, who is in charge of tonight's dinner at La Fish, citing its delicious and sweet taste that, he says, adds depth to any dish. To entice local people to try this alien animal, he serves it on sticky sushi rice with onions, bell peppers, garlic, tomatoes and coriander.

He says people in Catania can be "closed-minded" when it comes to trying unfamiliar ingredients such as the blue crab. "It's possible people may think to themselves: 'What is this?' Or say: 'Oh no, I don't like this.'" But he believes the taste will speak for itself and win over even the most sceptical diners. "That first bite does not lie."

Francesco Tiralongo, a marine biologist at the University of Catania, has documented the explosive population growth of the blue crab. He explains how rising marine temperatures in the Mediterranean have made Sicilian waters a welcoming environment for such alien species. "Changing fish consumption habits in Sicily to include alien species like the blue crab is a necessary response to climate change and current ecological challenges," he says.

The blue crab can also now frequently be found in Catania's fish market. On a warm day, it bustles with activity – a cacophony of sounds, sights and smells. Fishers, traders, local people and tourists mingle in narrow alleys, stepping over black cobblestones covered in bright crimson blood, as fishmongers cut large chunks of silvery swordfish and tuna.

On a small wooden table, holding a large knife next to buckets filled with crustaceans and fish, is Rosario, a fishmonger who has been selling blue crab for the past few months. "I sell it because people like it," he says. Having started with just a few kilos of blue crab a day, he now averages sales of about 20 kilos (44lb) daily.

Rosario says the traditional crustaceans he used to sell are not so readily available, but he gets "more and more of these blue crabs" from fishers.

Though it might be an unfamiliar ingredient in Sicily, he says it helps that blue crabs are no different from the many varieties of crustaceans the Catanese eat as part of their diet. "Here in Sicily, we eat fish every day."

"People are getting to know it," Rosario says, adding that they seem to really like its delicate and tender taste. Most of his customers prefer to eat blue crabs with spaghetti in tomato sauce, while he prefers to eat his crab boiled. "A very good dish," he says.

For now, Rosario only sells the Atlantic blue crab. He says other invasive species such as scorpion fish, lionfish and the silver-cheeked toadfish are too strange for his customers, adding: "They would not eat them."

The island needs a new way to deal with the interlopers, as the rising numbers of blue crabs are now causing serious economic pain to local Sicilian fishers, who are already facing a crisis over dwindling fish populations.

Alberto Pulizzi, the director general of the fisheries department of the Sicilian regional government, says the crabs are destroying fishers' nets and eating clams and mussels. These molluscs are highly prized in Italian dishes such as spaghetti alle vongole.

Tommaso Salamone, who runs La Fish with his brothers, says the family's big motivation for starting their restaurant was to take a new approach to the invaders, presenting them as something desirable.

In other words – if you can't beat 'em, eat 'em. He says: "We are making these dishes with blue crab to show people that anything can be edible."

*This report was supported by Journalismfund Europe*





*LEFT Rosario, a fishmonger, says he is now buying about 20kg of blue crabs daily from fishers.*

*ABOVE Atlantic blue crabs have no natural predators in the Mediterranean.* Kate Stanworth

*'Changing fish consumption habits in Sicily is a necessary response to climate change'*

*Biologist Francesco Tiralongo*

## World in brief

**DENMARK**
### Man questioned over PM assault

**Denmark's prime minister, Mette Frederiksen, suffered a light whiplash injury after she was assaulted in central Copenhagen on Friday, her office said.**

**A man, 39, was due to face a judge for questioning in connection with the attack, which police did not consider politically motivated.**

**Danish voters go to the polls in the EU elections today, amid several incidents of violence against politicians in Europe.** *Lili Bayer*

**NORTH KOREA**
### K-pop counters rubbish balloons

**North Korea yesterday again sent rubbish-carrying balloons towards the south, the South Korean military said, advising the public not to touch them but to report them. North Korea sent hundreds last week. A South Korean group, Fighters for Free North Korea, said it sent 10 balloons with USB sticks containing K-pop music and 200,000 leaflets against leader Kim Jong-un. A group of defectors said it had sent 10 balloons on Friday.** *AFP*

**FRANCE**
### Veteran weds in Normandy

**Second world war veteran Harold Terens and his sweetheart Jeanne Swerlin tied the knot yesterday inland from Normandy's D-day beaches. Terens, 100, called it the best day of his life. Swerlin, 96, said: "It's not just for young people, love, you know? We get butterflies. And we get a little action, also."**

**The location was the town hall of Carentan, a key D-day objective that saw ferocious fighting after the Allied landings on 6 June 1944. The wedding was not binding in law. Mayor Jean-Pierre Lhonneur's office said he wasn't empowered to wed non-resident foreign citizens. The couple are both American.** *AP*



**FRANCE**
### Biden in talks with Macron

**Emmanuel Macron and Joe Biden marked the start of the US president's official state visit to France with a ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe yesterday.**

**The two leaders are expected to discuss Ukraine, Gaza, global security and the strengthening of Nato, and policy issues including the climate crisis during Biden's five days in France. They held official talks before a state banquet at the Élysée palace last night.** *Kim Willsher*

# Are the Tories facing annihilation?

Even before Sunak's D-day debacle, the party's prospects were grim. Now some believe it may win fewer than 100 seats as an electoral asteroid threatens its very existence. By *Toby Helm*, Political Editor, and *Daniel Boffey* in Normandy »



# Disaster warning



BELOW
*In Sunak's place, David Cameron, left, stands with Macron, Scholz and Biden in France. Reuters*




RIGHT
*Sunak being interviewed about his early departure from the commemorations on Sky News.*



ABOVE
*Keir Starmer talks to Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, on Omaha beach.*

ABOVE RIGHT
*Nigel Farage, now leader of Reform UK, makes a point at the BBC election debate. PA*

Partly in preparation for the worst, but also as a way of finding hope for the longer term, a book that has not exactly been a UK bestseller has suddenly become popular bedtime reading among British Conservative politicians. It is entitled *Full Circle: Death and Resurrection in Canadian Conservative Politics.*

Written by the Canadian author and historian Bob Plamondon, it charts the obliteration and near-death experience of the country's centre-right Progressive Conservative party at the 1993 general election, when it crashed from holding a majority in the Commons to losing all but two seats.

Many dark years in the wilderness followed, before a merger and name change allowed it to claw itself back into the reckoning and eventually regain power in 2006, in one of the more remarkable political renaissances of recent times.

Even before Rishi Sunak's disastrous blunder on Thursday, when he flew home early from the D-day commemorations with veterans and world leaders to conduct a political interview (having insisted politics was being suspended for the day), potential parallels with the Canadian experience were already being drawn.

Could the Tories in Britain be all but wiped out in a similar way, Conservatives are now asking themselves. And if so, what are the chances of a previously annihilated party rising again from the ashes?

This weekend, these questions seem ever more pertinent. The UK Conservative party seems to be spinning ever faster into a death spiral, while Labour shores up its poll lead and poses as a government in waiting.

At the end of an emotional service at the British Normandy memorial near Ver-sur-Mer on Thursday, Keir Starmer agreed to a short interview with broadcasters on the lawns overlooking Gold beach.

After being asked to give his thoughts on the events of 80 years ago, the TV journalists pressed Starmer about the latest ins and out of the general election campaign and rows with Sunak over tax.

The Labour leader refused to engage. The day, he told the reporters, was for the veterans, not political point-scoring. He was asked once more, and, again, Starmer opted not to take the free hit. His next stop was the international commemoration on Omaha beach.

Meanwhile, Sunak had taken his leave and was already on the plane home, slipping away to do an interview with ITV's Paul Brand that may well turn out to be another hammer blow to his chances of re-election.

Next morning, Labour's defence spokesperson, John Healey, was able to slot the ball into an open net, as veterans accused Sunak of letting the country down.

"Given that the prime minister has been campaigning on the idea that young people should complete a year's national service, what does it say that he appears to have been unable to complete a single afternoon of it?" It could hardly have been more damning.

Incredibly, Sunak's ability to lead the Tories even until polling day on 4 July – never mind beyond – is now being called into doubt by some on his own side.

Tory candidates and staff out campaigning this weekend to save their seats are beyond despair. One said on Friday: "If you had actually tried to pick an issue on which to upset my constituents, you could not have chosen a better one."

On Friday morning, the former Tory special adviser Sam Freedman revealed how talk of replacing Sunak before the election was spreading among his friends and followers on X: "Had several messages this morning asking me if there's any precedent, in any country, for a major party leader being replaced during a campaign. I can't find one."

Writing in today's *Observer*, Rob Ford, a leading expert on voting trends, says the evidence from polls shows that "an electoral asteroid is streaking through the atmosphere" and is heading for the Tory heartlands. Ford no longer thinks it impossible that the Conservatives could end up with less than 100 seats, so badly is their campaign misfiring and so much trust have they lost over 14 years and the tenures of five prime ministers.

Other polling experts say that such is the geographical spread of the Tory vote, and the brutal nature of the first past the post system, that once their vote drops into the low 20% region, the number of seats could fall into double digits – and could go as low as 20.

> *'If you had tried to pick an issue to upset constituents you could not have done better'*
> Tory candidate

Last week began terribly for the Tories and Sunak – but still managed to get worse. First came apocalyptic polls, including one in the *Daily Mail* predicting the Tories would win just 72 seats.

Then Nigel Farage announced he was standing for Reform UK in Clacton-on-Sea, and would lead the hard-right party for the next five years. Every Tory candidate knew instantly that the rightwing vote in their area was now much more likely to split, making the job of retaining seats more difficult.

"Rarely can a party have received two such blows in one afternoon," said election guru John Curtice, adding: "Unfortunately for the Conservatives, most of Reform's support comes from those who backed Boris Johnson's Get Brexit Done appeal in 2019 – many of whom would probably revert to the Conservatives if Reform were not now an option."

A telltale sign of the campaign imploding was the way Conservatives were suddenly prepared to tear into their own leader, so disillusioned and despairing had they become.

Just as Sunak was trying to rebut claims in midweek that he had lied over Labour's tax plans, Fraser Nelson, the editor of the Tory-supporting *Spectator* magazine, appeared to side more with Labour than Sunak. "There are serious issues at stake in this general election, and the Tories have just released nonsense figures with fake






attribution and given it to newspapers who took it on trust," wrote Nelson. "I'm really not sure that this will help their chances very much."

Similarly, former Tory chancellor George Osborne was not over-supportive when he said mockingly on his podcast with Ed Balls that Sunak was visiting ultra-safe seats that no other leader would have visited because they were the only ones left he could win. "He's visiting Honiton in Devon. He is visiting Harpenden in Hertfordshire, is visiting Macclesfield in Cheshire. Those are traditionally safe, Conservative seats that I don't think a Conservative leader would have visited in the general election in my lifetime," Osborne said.

So with the campaign hurtling off the rails, the polls refusing to turn, Farage threatening to split the right-wing vote and morale plunging, where are the Tories heading in the event of humiliation, or even annihilation? There are various theories, depending on the gravity of the defeat, though no one really knows, and few want to go public with their thoughts.

Former Tory cabinet minister David Gauke believes things will probably be at the worse end of expectations for the Tories on election night and that the party would then lurch dramatically to the right. "My fear is – particularly if Reform do well and Nigel

Continued on page 36 »

**ON OTHER PAGES**

**Sunak is driving the Tories over the electoral cliff edge** Observer Comment, page 42

**In all this noisy election debate, why is there a conspiracy of silence about Brexit?** Andrew Rawnsley, page 43

# Sunak's chance was always slim. And the numbers just get worse

Polling figures will bring no comfort to a party trailing Labour on virtually every issue, says Robert Ford

Was this the week the wheels came off for Rishi Sunak? After two weeks of campaigning for "a clear plan of bold action for a secure future" the verdict in the polls is clear: voters don't like his clear plan, they don't want his bold actions, and they believe their future will be more secure without him. All of this was true even before the prime minister's calamitous Thursday afternoon decision to leave D-day commemorations early for a pre-recorded media interview.

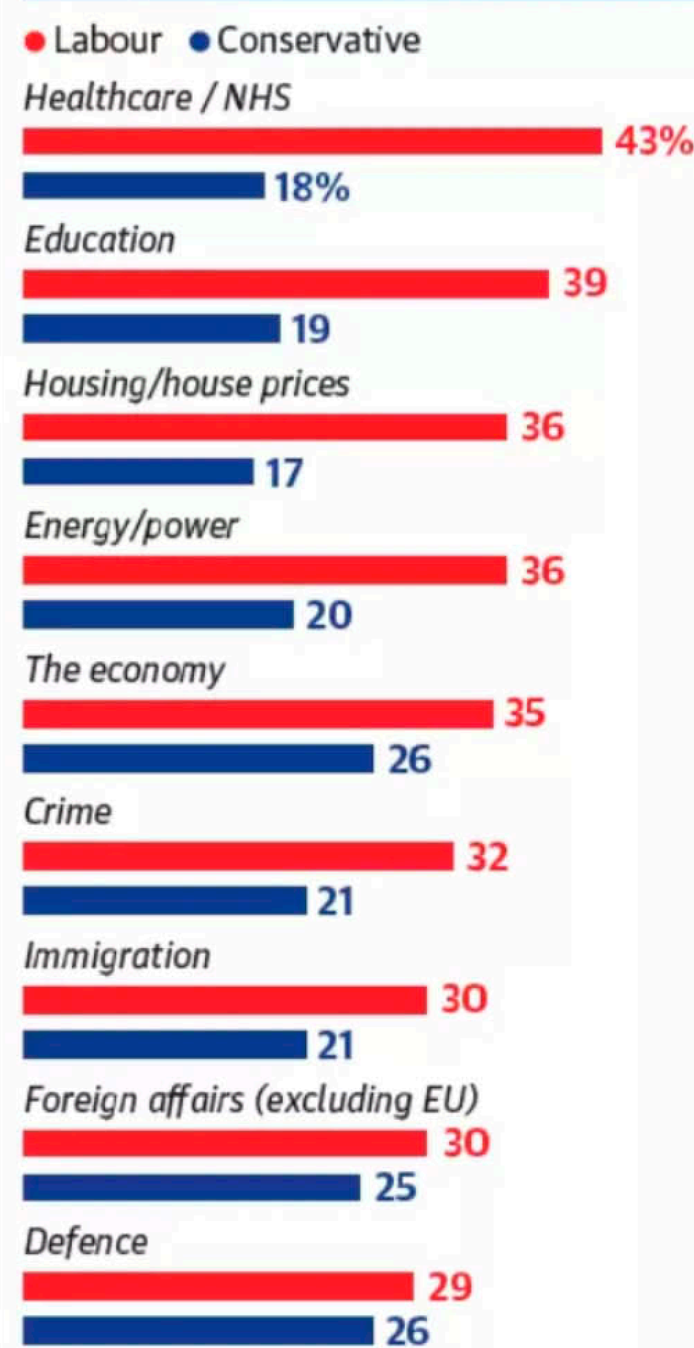
Make no mistake: the Conservatives are now staring down the barrel. Their campaign is failing on every front, with precious little time left. Voters are making their minds up, and what the prime minister offers is not what they want.

A key theme of every recent Conservative campaign has been to build up the leader and sow doubts about their opponent. But a leader-focused approach only makes sense if voters like your leader, or at least prefer them to the alternative. The prime minister's three Tory predecessors all started their campaigns ahead, giving them an advantage to try to press home.

Sunak has no such advantage. His leader approvals at the start of the campaign are among the worst ever recorded – as bad as Jeremy Corbyn in 2019, or Gordon Brown in the depths of the financial crisis. His campaign trail choices have not improved things. Keir Starmer may not set hearts racing, but running against such an opponent he does not have to. Starmer began this campaign with the same leader ratings advantage as Tony Blair had over John Major in 1997.

The campaign to date has not changed this picture, as Opinium's regular questions on leadership qualities confirm. Keir Starmer gets no stellar ratings, but he still outshines Rishi Sunak's dreadful ratings on every quality from being in touch to likability and competence.

Governments can also run on their records. We see this in the Conservatives' promotion of their "bold actions" on Covid furlough, energy prices, pensions and taxes on the campaign trail, and in debates. Framing a campaign around past




successes can be a smart strategy when voters credit you for performing well. The problem for Sunak is that his party's reputation is now battered, and voters give his government poor marks across the board.

The polling verdict on the outgoing government is damning. More than six in every 10 voters think the government has performed badly on every single issue except defence and security – and Sunak's blunders last week will probably cloud that one remaining bright spot. Voters give the government even worse marks on the issues they care about most, with 80 or 90% giving them a fail grade on the issues that matter most to them.

Other polling paints a similar picture – more than four-fifths of voters polled by Ipsos last week are dissatisfied with the way the government is running the country (83%), and two-thirds do not think the Conservatives deserve to be re-elected (67%). Both of these figures are the highest recorded since Sunak took charge.

The bad news doesn't stop there. In campaigns, established parties can typically lean into brand advantages, drawing on long-established strengths. Not this time. Sunak's Tories now trail Labour on every single issue in the most recent YouGov polling. Longstanding Tory advantages in areas such as immigration, crime and defence are gone, while Labour have opened up towering leads in traditional areas of strength such as health, education and housing. Crucially, Labour have opened up a lead on the economy, overturning an advantage the Conservatives held even in the 1997 landslide defeat. The legacy of Liz Truss cuts deep.

If voters don't like the past, get them to look to the future. No wonder, then, that the Tory campaign has showered us with eyecatching new pledges and policies. While the new policies poll well in isolation, they haven't changed the electoral weather. The problem once again is reputation. Voters who feel the government has failed on everything don't trust Sunak or his party to deliver anything new. A new restaurant can produce an eyecatching menu, but it won't succeed if the chef has health and safety violations and there's a fire in the kitchen.

The Tory policy barrage was perhaps not expected to turn around fortunes across the board. The goal was narrower: win back disaffected Brexiters tempted by Reform UK. Announcements such as national service and the pensions "triple lock plus" were supposed to secure the right flank, even at the risk of further alienating moderate swing voters. Nigel Farage sent that strategy to the seabed on Monday when he returned as Reform UK leader.

The Conservatives cannot hope to out-Farage Farage – the Reform curious who distrust Rishi adore Nigel, who can trump any red meat offered by the Tory campaign with a juicier steak of his own. The Tories have wasted two precious weeks trying to see off a revolt on the right which is guaranteed to hit them hard. Farage is certain to hurt the Conservatives. The only question is how badly.

Many of these disadvantages were baked in long ago. This was always going to be a campaign against the odds. Yet Sunak seems determined to make things worse with a campaign full of pratfalls. This week's Opinium poll for the *Observer* only adds to the bad news, with growing Labour leads on the biggest issues and more than half of voters saying the Tories had a bad week. Four in 10 of those polled said they thought it would be a good thing if the coming election entirely obliterated the Conservatives, as happened to their Canadian cousins in 1993, going from a majority to just two seats.

Such voters may yet get their wish. Two weeks in, the dial has shifted from likely defeat to looming disaster. An electoral asteroid is streaking through the British atmosphere. Impact in the Tory heartlands is just weeks away. Brace, brace.

*Robert Ford is professor of political science at Manchester University*

Politics

# The Tories on the edge of annihilation

» Continued from page 35

Farage is elected as the MP for Clacton – that the instincts of much of the Conservative party will be that we need to lean into that, we need to unite the right, we need to form an alliance, if not a merger, with Reform, and that is where the Conservative party has to go."

If that did happen, Gauke says, "I think the Conservative party is surrendering for at least a generation, possibly for ever, its once held position as the natural party of government, the party of the middle classes, the home counties, of business".

He believes that former home secretary Priti Patel could well emerge as the new Tory leader, strike some kind of deal with Farage, and invite Boris Johnson back in to the parliamentary party. Patel, he says,



*'I predict Priti Patel will lead the party, on a platform of uniting the right'*

*David Gauke, above*

remains on better terms with Johnson than other possible leadership contenders from the right such as Suella Braverman, Kemi Badenoch and Robert Jenrick. She is also on good terms with Farage.

"I have long predicted that Priti Patel would lead the party after the general election, standing on a platform of uniting the right, of wanting to reach some kind of accommodation with Nigel Farage, of wanting to bring back Boris Johnson into the parliamentary party," Gauke says.

"One of the fascinating political issues of the post-election world will be the Nigel Farage/Boris Johnson relationship, and it may well be that it is not possible for one party to contain them both, but I think she will try to find a way."

Tim Bale, professor of politics at Queen Mary, University of London, who has done extensive research on the likely political complexion of the Tory party in the event of a defeat, says that in a nightmare scenario – where it wins only about 100 seats – the parliamentary party that would emerge would be "more southern, more nimbyish, more Oxbridge-educated, and quite possibly a little more representative (although still not very representative) of ethnic minorities, as well as women". Where this would leave the party is not clear to him nor anyone else.

Bale says he had always recoiled from the idea that the Tory party could go out of business and just disappear, but now he thinks some radical reconfiguration could happen.

"While talk of the Tories facing an 'existential threat' or 'going out of business' tends to make me reach for my revolver, I wouldn't entirely dismiss the chances of such a takeover, hostile or otherwise," he says.

"A toxic combination of Brexit, Boris Johnson, and an increasingly hysterical rightwing media ecosystem – along with a highly unrepresentative grassroots membership that nevertheless has the final say on choosing the party's leader – has pushed the party towards becoming an ersatz populist radical-right party rather than a mainstream centre-right outfit.

"In 1997, the party merely suffered a very bad defeat, and even that saw it head off to the ideological hills for a while, electing William Hague – he of 'a foreign land' and 'save the pound'. A truly catastrophic, nightmare-scenario result would only see the Tory party travel further down that road toward radical rightwing populism than it has already travelled since 2016 – and without an obvious off-ramp.

"Whether, at that point, it would still be the same Conservative party which has dominated British politics since the coming of democracy, I'm honestly no longer sure."

Ryan Shorthouse, executive chair of the Bright Blue thinktank, which promotes liberal Conservatism, says that if Reform does well, "some people will be pushing for some kind of merger with Reform" and that "some on the Tory right will feel it is the right place for them". But he believes that could then leave a higher proportion of one nation Tories in the parliamentary party, who would not want to choose a rightwing leader to succeed Sunak. "The lesson from Rishi is that moving to the right is the wrong approach, so my view is that the MPs will be more one nation and will pick someone who is more of their persuasion."

The reality is that, as things go from bad to worse on the campaign trail, most Tories are braced for annihilation. But no one knows how, or whether, the party could survive, after the asteroid has struck, in anything like its current form – or whether the Conservatives could somehow eventually reinvent themselves, as happened in Canada.

Culture



*Diverse sounds of summer: Alice Cooper, right, had a hit with School's Out in 1972; Sophie Ellis-Bextor sang Groovejet in 2000. David Dagley/ Shutterstock*

# A shot at glory
# Will Espresso be our summer song?

Sabrina Carpenter's hit is fun, frothy and hard to resist: all the qualities that can make a tune a touchstone for sunny memories, writes Barbara Ellen

Have you heard the Sabrina Carpenter song Espresso? Even if you don't know it by name, you will have done. It's honeyed but arch ("That's that me, espresso"). Frothy, hooky, with a lyrical sting ("My 'give a fucks' are on vacation"). The coquettish hyperreal video has the US singer draped over speedboats and surfboards like a Superdry Bardot (glossy subterfuge; mainstream with a wink).

Carpenter was the opening act on the Australian leg of Taylor Swift's Eras tour, but her Espresso knocked Swift's Fortnight off the top spot on Global Spotify and been streamed more than 434m times.

Creeping into the zeitgeist through the back door, it's perfectly poised to grab the sought-after trophy: the song of the summer.

While there are other contenders (Benson Boone's Beautiful Things; Tommy Richman's Million Dollar Baby; Kendrick Lamar's Not Like Us; Eminem's Houdini), behemoths such as Swift, Beyoncé, and Billie Eilish seem (hmm, interesting) a little shoved to the side. A case of: sorry, my queens, you don't always get to stroll in and take what you want.

What is the song of the summer (SOTS)? Short answer: many things. It's an all-engulfing seasonal mega-hit that defines the cultural moment and transcends categorisation and market demographics. It's an irresistible earworm with sand dusted between its toes and wind ruffling its hair. It's unstoppably ubiquitous, swirling all around you, like an odourless cultural gas.

Time was, it mainly manifested via radio play or a film soundtrack or the dancefloor of a holiday destination, but now it's all about platforms like TikTok (which embraced Kylie Minogue's Padam Padam last year). Such songs tend to be breezy, upbeat and flirtatious, evoking optimism, freedom, beaches, festivals, the long school and college holidays. They are often aimed at the young – the phenomenon of the song of the summer rose with the invention of the teenager. Increased leisure time and the rise of cinema and travel played their part too.

Most would agree that the Beach Boys were the big bang moment for the quintessential summer sound (Good Vibrations; I Get Around), but the distinct SOTS sphere is an eclectic miscellany of genres, styles and moods. In the past, it's included everything from the Supremes (Where Did Our Love Go?, 1964) to Alice Cooper (School's Out, 1972) to the Knack (My Sharona, 1979).

Some songs evoke travel: Duran Duran posturing on yachts for Rio; the sample of a plane on Groovejet (If This Ain't Love) by Spiller and



Below: Grease, the summer sound of 1978; right, Beyoncé; far right, Kylie Minogue.

LEFT Sabrina Carpenter on stage during Radio 1's Big Weekend in Luton last month. Right, Kate Bush. Richard Isaac/ Rex Shutterstock

Sophie Ellis-Bextor, which was rumoured to be from the terrace at Space, the club near Ibiza's airport. Film songs that ruled the summer include Take My Breath Away from *Top Gun*'s 1986 soundtrack, 1991's (Everything I Do) I Do It For You by Bryan Adams, and the entire *Grease* soundtrack in 1978.

In a sphere that's routinely colourblind, not just disco but Latin beats have proved recurringly modish (1987's Bamboléo by the Gipsy Kings; Ricky Martin's Livin' La Vida Loca in 1999; 1996's eternal wedding banger Macarena by Los del Rio). Some artists resort to repurposing old grooves (see J-Lo's sample of Kaoma's Lambada in her worldwide hit with Pitbull, On the Floor, from 2011).

Then there are the outliers and curios that bounce out of left-field. The grunge-adjacent slacker manifesto of Beck's Loser in 1993. Kate Bush's Running Up That Hill, which engulfed summer 2022 after being used on Netflix's *Stranger Things*. The brilliant full-on filth of WAP from Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion in 2020. Take a bow, Deee-Lite's 1990 Groove Is in the Heart.

The message is clear: the all-engulfing summer pop genre has no bouncer on the door: anyone and anything can get in, and they often do. Nor does it have a sense of hierarchy: a random song will cheerfully push aside the big hitters. Yet still some dismiss the song of the summer as a frivolity. Too poppy, too light, too corporate, perhaps not quite as naff as a Christmas song, but not for serious music aficionados.

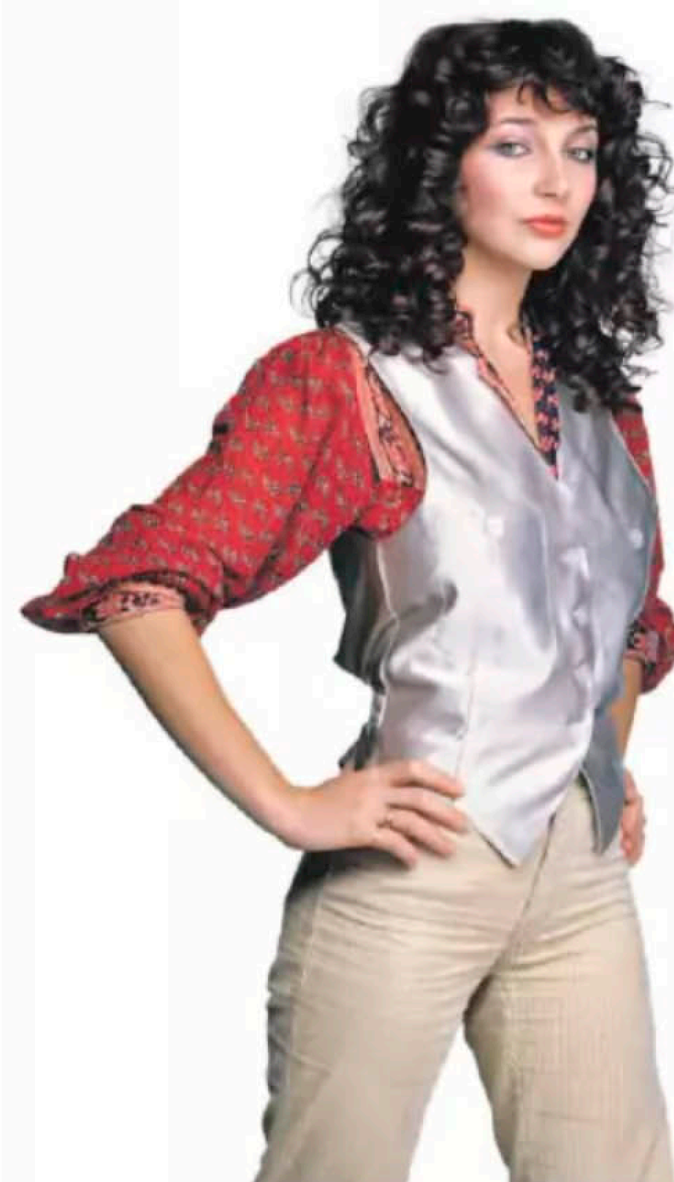
In truth, this a wilful genre that refuses to comply. For songs whose actual job it is to evoke the summer mood (in effect a straw hat you can dance to), surprisingly few have summer in the title or as their theme.

Some summers, there are so many great songs it's hard to choose. The timing is elastic: you could be eating your Easter eggs in spring and it could land. For me, listening to Soul II Soul's Keep on Movin' sparks golden Proustian flashbacks to lolling on sun-baked commons … but it was birthed in March.

Looking behind the music industry curtain, the song of the summer is a peak business moment in the calendar. The industry gears itself up for it. Artists plan releases around it. There will be industry money driving interest on the likes of TikTok. Everybody wants to have The Song (and the exposure and big bucks that come with it). There have been attempts to work out the SOTS formula, to break the secrets of the code, in terms of melody, tempo, energy, danceability, and something called "acousticness".

All of which sounds amusing. (The algebra of the dance-floor banger? The physics of the sun-soaked bop?) However, such attempts are also telling, revealing an excruciating truth about the music business: that it's frightened of you – the music-consuming public. It doesn't know who you are and what you want. It wants to set the pace and tone, but sometimes it just has to chase after you and your wayward fluctuating tastes and whims like a bewildered lover. If you find it hard to predict the song of the summer, then (whisper it) so does the music industry.

***Some come out of left-field: Kate Bush's Running Up That Hill engulfed the summer of 2022***



Perhaps this wayward quality (unknowability, eccentricity) makes the SOTS more interesting, not least in the incredible power it harnesses. Not only by bypassing obvious super-brand shoo-ins (your Taylors and Billies), but also by anointing less obvious artists, and readjusting music industry settings for the foreseeable.

Let's not get ahead of ourselves: the song of the summer is as commercial as anything else. Still, it remains curiously resistant to being wholly sewn up. Cynical identikit tracks don't tend to crawl into the zeitgeist and become our songs of the summer. Misfits, outsiders and newbies have a chance. Rihanna had her first huge hit with Umbrella in the summer of 2007. Katy Perry's breakthrough song was I Kissed a Girl in 2008.

So as much as the SOTS encapsulates the music industry ethos (the mega-selling universal hit), it also in a way defies it. It has to, in order to do its job: capture the mood of the nation (or nations); catch that lightning in a bottle. It can be seen in the sheer randomness of what hits. How, despite all the effort, the code remains uncrackable. Something (a hook, a mood, an energy, an invigorating sup of Espresso) snags and fixes, and that's that.

In this way, the Song of the Summer is also the sound of pop-cultural democracy in action. Whichever artists and product the industry breadheads want to push, whatever they want to be the song of the summer, ultimately it doesn't matter. The people always decide.

Sport



*Germany celebrate their World Cup win in 2014 with president Angela Merkel and manager Jogi Löw. Below, team-mates surround Philipp Lahm after his wonder goal in 2006. Guido Bergmann/EPA*

# Euros stir German memories of their golden days – on and off the pitch

As the country hosts the 2024 tournament, *Philip Oltermann* looks back to 2006, when a single goal lifted a weary nation out of the doldrums, and asks if it could happen again

Sometimes a goal can lift not just the crowd inside a stadium but an entire nation. It was on this same day 18 years ago that Germany's left-back, Philipp Lahm, took a punt from outside the penalty area that pinged off the Costa Rican upright into the back of the net, just six minutes into the opening game of the 2006 World Cup, which Germany was hosting.

Lahm's wonder goal kickstarted a competition that has gone down in German folklore as the "summer fairytale": four balmy weeks in which Germany cast aside its gloomy, world-weary tendencies and shed its sporting image as a joyless juggernaut. Even though eventual winners Italy cut the fairytale short – and perhaps precisely because there wasn't a dream ending for the host nation, the tournament left behind a country transformed in the eyes of the world: less threatening, more friendly and more at ease with itself and its past.

Yet as Europe's largest economy prepares to host another major football tournament, the 2024 Uefa European Football Championship, the carefree weightlessness of 2006 is once again hard to come by.

"You wouldn't think we are a week away from a major tournament being hosted here," said Musa Okwonga, a British football writer and podcast host who has lived in Berlin since 2014. "At previous tournaments, not just at the World Cup 2006 but even at the Euros in 2016, there was a vibrancy on the streets. The energy felt really different."

A survey carried out by Augsburg's Institute for Generation Research back in April found that every fifth German citizen questioned had no idea that Germany was about to host a major sporting event. In the same survey, 88% said that people were more captivated by football tournaments in the past.

An ad released by sportswear maker Adidas to launch the German team's tournament kit pokes fun at the lack of excitement in the buildup. "What do you think of the new jersey?" a young man asks his friend as he grabs a drink from the fridge of a corner shop. The girl shrugs and barely looks up from her phone. "Well, it's typically German," she says.

Yet much of the doubtful mood in the country has to do precisely with the fact that old certainties about what is "typically German" no longer hold.

"Typically German" used to mean a resilient economic motor chugging away at the core of the European Union. Last year Germany was the only industrial nation that did not record any growth, having slipped into recession in the first three months of the year. In March this year, a group of leading German economic thinktanks revised their growth forecast down from 1.2% to near-stagnation, at 0.1% for the year.

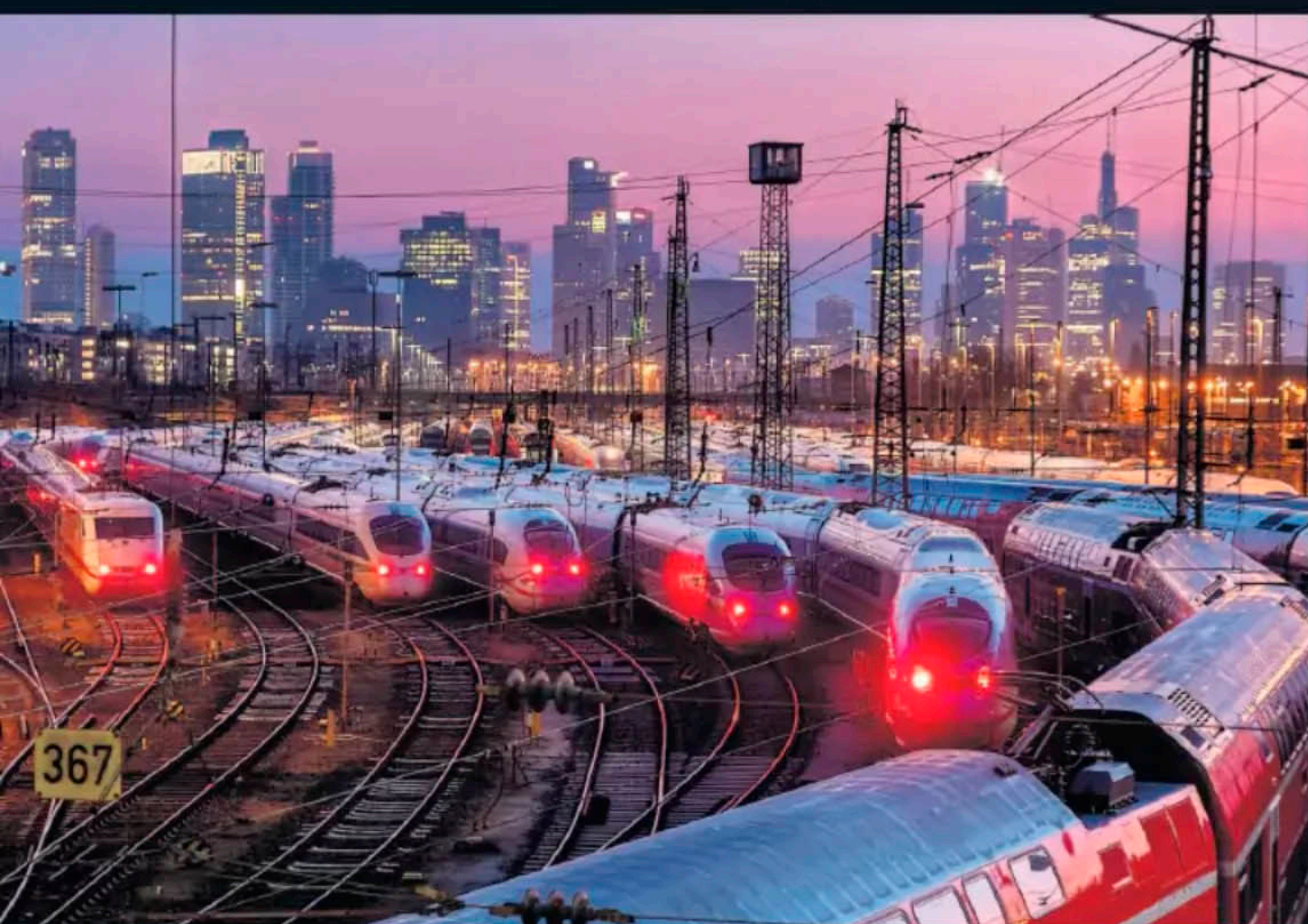
High energy prices and production costs have brought fears of industrial decline. According to this spring's Eurobarometer survey, only 14% of those questioned in Germany believe that the economic situation will improve over the next 12 months, fewer than in most other EU states.

> *'In several ways, it was the summer in which Germany managed to make peace with itself'*
> *Omid Nouripour, politician*

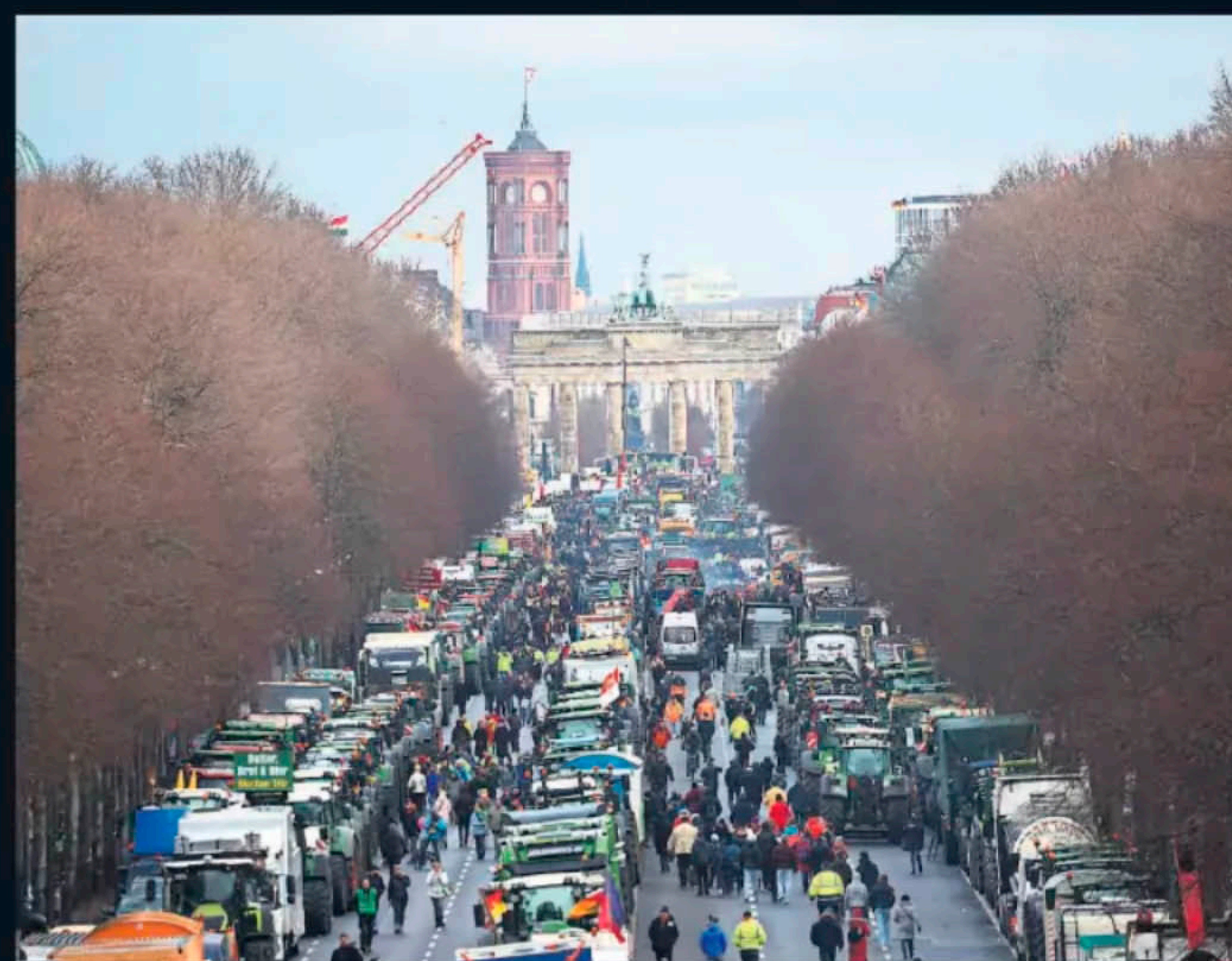
"Typically German" used to mean a consensus-seeking approach to industrial relations and policymaking, but over the last 12 months the country has seen a series of strikes by train drivers, freight carriers and agricultural workers, and a coalition government whose three parties seem at odds on everything from climate measures and transport policy to military aid for Ukraine.

Winning also used to be seen as a typically German habit, especially at football tournaments, but in sport too there is a sense that the formulas of old can no longer be relied upon. "We've had first-round exits at the last two World Cups, which is as embarrassing as it gets," said Omid Nouripour, co-leader of the German Green party.

After sacking coach Hansi Flick nine months before the start of the tournament and bringing in the young former Bayern Munich manager Julian Nagelsmann, the *Nationalmannschaft* lost two of its first four games. Even in Nouripour's home town, Frankfurt,




*LEFT Trains in Frankfurt, brought to a halt by a drivers' strike in January.*



*LEFT Farmers block the road in front of the Brandenburg gate in Berlin during their nationwide strike in January.*

where the German football association is headquartered, "the mood among the fans was terrible".

Like most German football fans, Eintracht Frankfurt supporter Nouripour is still dreamy-eyed when recalling the halcyon summer of 2006: "'A time to make friends' wasn't just the tournament's official motto – we absolutely meant it and lived it," he said. "In several ways, it was the summer in which Germany managed to make peace with itself."

Waving the black-red-gold tricolour used to be seen by many Germans as an expression of crass and dubious nationalism, but that summer the flag was all over the country, flying from cars and windows and painted on smiling faces.

Nouripour's Green party was out of power at the time, its first spell as a governing coalition partner to Gerhard Schröder's Social Democrats cut short by a snap election nine months earlier. "When the tournament started, we were still having a hard time finding our place in opposition, and it was a bit painful to see all that enthusiasm was associated with Merkel instead of us," he said.

The heyday of the Angela Merkel era coincides neatly with the German football team's period of dominance under coach Jogi Löw, who was promoted from assistant to head coach after the home tournament.

While Löw led Germany to its fourth World Cup title in 2014, Germany's economy rediscovered its stride in the first half of Merkel's tenure. Its industry opened up new markets in Europe, North America and China, exports soaring to new records at the start of the 2010s. Despite a sharp decline in GDP in 2008 and 2009, Germany experienced only marginal increases in unemployment during the global recession.

Both Löw and Merkel in their own way asserted that Germany could be diverse and successful at the same time. The spine of the team that claimed the title in 2014 had players of Ghanian, Tunisian and Turkish descent. Germany's first female chancellor, though always sceptical of multiculturalism in its Anglo-Saxon laissez-faire sense, was unwavering in her belief that her country should and could shelter and integrate more than a million new arrivals during the 2015 refugee crisis. In a final moment of synchronicity, the chancellor and the coach stepped down from their roles the same year, in 2021.

In hindsight, the stability of the Merkel-Löw era may have masked structural problems that have come to haunt their respective successors since. German naivety in dealings with Russia, exemplified by the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project pursued by Merkel, have not just been decried by Nouripour's Green party, which has governed with Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats and the pro-business Free Democratic party since 2021.

"There are some parallels to football," the environmental party's co-leader said. "The World Cup in 2006 was considered such a success that the German FA didn't dare tinker with the formula over the decade that followed." He cited the German football academy system's failure to produce modern strikers comparable to Kylian Mbappé or Erling Haaland.

"It feels like German politics and German football went stale around the same time," said Musa Okwonga, who co-presents the Stadio football podcast. "It was around 2018 that the national team missed the point where it should have gone for a complete change of guard. And once you signal a lack of creativity, the predators start snapping at your heels. For Merkel, that was certainly also the case after the AfD [far-right Alternative für Deutschland] entered parliament in 2017."

Yet for all the doom and gloom in 2024, it's easy to forget that the mood in Germany was similarly downcast before the 2006 tournament.

Economic stagnation, high unemployment and an acrimonious debate about labour market reforms in the early noughties had earned the country the label the "sick man of Europe". In a Eurobarometer survey in spring 2006, German respondents were the most pessimistic out of 25 EU members when asked about their hopes for the next five years, with only 25% saying they were optimistic about the future.

Then as now, the glory days of German football looked to have passed. The national team had played poorly in 1998, failed at the group stages in the 2000 and 2004 European championships, and lost 4-1 to Italy in a warm-up friendly a few weeks before the tournament start. "The whole world is laughing at our losers," wrote tabloid *Bild* at the time. Yet all that was forgotten when Philipp Lahm's rocket found the top-right corner.

As Germany's opening match against Scotland on Friday 14 June has come into view, there are still hopes that the Euros might create a summer to remember after all. After a hit-and-miss start under Nagelsmann, who is only 36, the national side has shown flashes of promise. Veteran Real Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos has come out of retirement for his final tournament while other 2014 World Cup winners, like the Dortmund defender Mats Hummels, have been dropped, allowing younger players to step up.

There was a brief taster of that summer fairytale feeling when one of these youngsters, the 21-year-old Leverkusen midfielder Florian Wirtz, scored a Lahm-esque thunderbolt just seven seconds into a friendly match against France in March.

Even the musical jingle that has been played at recent Germany matches has spoken of a less tense mood, or at least the yearning for one. After a fan petition, the German FA last week announced Peter Schilling's 1982 hit Major Tom as its official goal anthem – a song that tells the story of an astronaut who leaves his troubles on planet Earth behind and drifts off into space, "completely untethered [...] completely weightless".

If that sounds too on the nose, consider that the DJ whose eurotrance track Kernkraft 400 accompanied the German national side's lead-footed phase over the previous five years went under the moniker Zombie Nation.

"The funny thing is, it really feels like we could be in 2006 again after all," said Okwonga. "Germany has an exciting young coach and a team that really feels like the best the country has to offer.

"I've spent a lot of the last few weeks trying to convince Germans how good their team actually is, because they didn't want to believe me. That in itself feels like a metaphor for the state of the nation."

**ON OTHER PAGES**

**Bellingham now; Rooney in 2006: Southgate wary of saviour syndrome**
Observer Sport, page 6

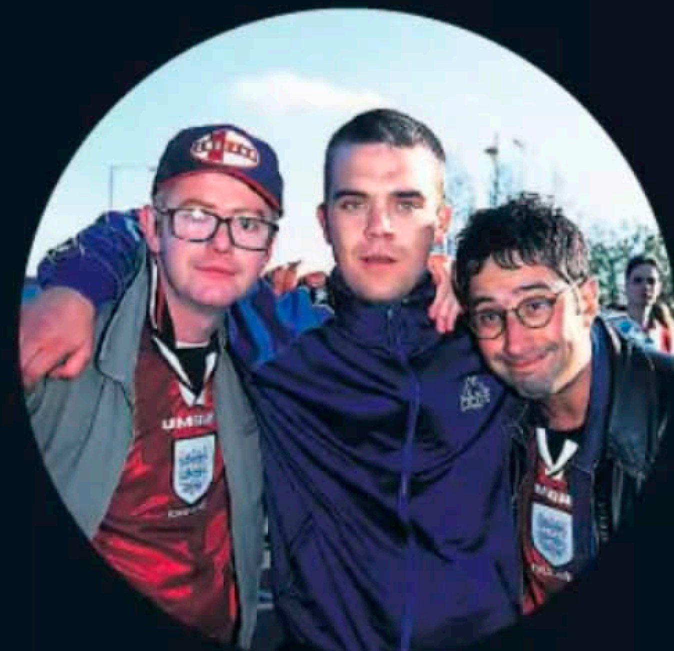
## Political football

**Other tournaments that told a story about their hosts:**

**World Cup '82**
Spain was handed the right to host the 1982 World Cup in 1966 while it was still a dictatorship. But General Franco did not get to watch it, having died seven years earlier. The tournament became an opportunity for the country to showcase la Transición, the long but successful journey to a pluralistic, democratic society. Four months later, the Socialist party won the general election by a landslide.



**Euro '96**
For the hosts, Euro '96 marked the moment the English game stepped out of the shadow of hooliganism and became respectable again. Coinciding with the "Cool Britannia" outbreak of creativity in British music and art, it helped momentum towards the fresh start of Tony Blair's election victory a year later – even if New Labour spin doctors feared England winning could have helped the Tories stay in power.



**World Cup '98**
Early on, the French media feared a sporting embarrassment for les Bleus. In the end, a 3-0 win for the hosts against favourites Brazil in the final was a defining moment for a modern, multicultural France, with Zinedine Zidane voted man of the match.



Wildlife





LEFT *A perch in Richmond Park, London. Right, the bright-green arrivals flock together in the evening.* Getty.

# What do we really make of our noisy new neighbours?

Ring-necked parakeet numbers are rising in Britain. But as a new poll reveals, not everyone is happy, says nature writer *Stephen Moss*

Yet another opinion poll was published last week, focusing on British people's attitudes towards new arrivals on our shores. They didn't get here on small boats, and they won't feature in the TV general election debates. They're not human beings, but birds: ring-necked parakeets.

Nevertheless, they are highly divisive, with the poll revealing that the colourful creatures prompt reactions from downright hostility, through grudging acceptance, to a warm welcome.

Almost 4,000 UK residents were interviewed for the online survey, published in the open-access journal *NeoBiota*. Researchers from Imperial College London, the universities of Exeter and Brighton, and the British Trust for Ornithology discovered that 90% were aware of the gaudy birds, and just over half knew the name of the species, which is also known as the rose-ringed parakeet, after its pink and grey neck ring.

The vast majority of people – roughly five out of six – consider parakeets aesthetically pleasing, yet at the same time almost half have negative opinions about them. In rural areas, this rises to almost two-thirds, with some suggesting that these noisy, screeching birds disturb the bucolic peace – hence the title of the research paper, *Not in the countryside please!*

Age also makes a difference: older respondents are far more hostile to the birds than younger ones, who mostly accept their presence, especially in London, their main stronghold. Comments varied from "very colourful and interesting to see", to "a pain in the backside – so intrusively noisy", which can't really be argued with. The newspaper columnist Hugo Rifkind once likened them to young men on a stag do.

Others welcome them as a splash of colour in what they see as nature-depleted urban environments.

I've been aware of these exotic birds for almost half a century. In the late 1970s, only a decade after they first began to colonise Britain, I caught sight of one near my childhood home, on the outskirts of west London. To say it stood out among the drab suburban birdlife would be an understatement.

Ring-necked parakeets remained fairly scarce for decades, but from the late 1990s onwards numbers began to rise exponentially. Twenty years ago, when my youngest offspring were born, we lived in a small house in the London suburbs, with a tiny garden. The parakeets soon discovered our bird feeders, and would happily stay put even as the children played only feet away from them.

Today I see – or more often hear – them almost anywhere I go in London. They are also found in cities elsewhere in the UK, but their preference for gathering each evening in large communal roosts has limited their spread – I've yet to see one in my adopted home of Somerset.

Over the years, I've heard many myths about how they got here in the first place. "They were released by a stoned Jimi Hendrix, who let them out in London's Carnaby Street..."; "They escaped from the film set of *The African Queen*..."; "They made a bid for freedom when their cage broke during the Great Storm of 1987..."

But as Nick Hunt and Tim Mitchell point out in their entertaining and informative book *The Parakeeting of London: An Adventure in Gonzo Ornithology*, all these apparently convincing stories are urban myths. Hunt and Mitchell were actually the first to investigate people's response to these exotic new arrivals, speaking to those who were surprised to come across them in their local neighbourhood.



ABOVE *One theory about the parakeets' presence is that a stoned Jimi Hendrix released them in London's Carnaby Street.* Rex

The truth about the parakeets' presence here is rather a letdown: as popular cagebirds, it was inevitable some would escape. And because they live in the foothills of the Himalayas, they can easily cope with the British winter.

There are genuine concerns about the birds' ecological impact, including the devastation that a flock can wreak on fruit crops. They could also harm native species, by competing for nest-holes with jackdaws, stock doves and starlings. Conversely, London's growing population of peregrines are delighted by the arrival of the parakeets, whose slow, direct flight makes them far easier to catch than the faster and more manoeuvrable pigeons.

Numbers are rising, too. The latest population estimate, from the British Trust for Ornithology, suggests a UK breeding population of 12,000 pairs, a 10-fold increase in the past 30 years. If this exponential rise continued, then by the end of this century parakeets would rival the wren as our commonest bird. Fortunately, perhaps, the signs are that their numbers have finally begun to level out. Nevertheless, conservationists are keeping a close eye on the expansion of the species.

Although I appreciate the ecological arguments against these birds, and have some sympathy with the suggestion that they should be culled to avoid problems in the future, I also have a real soft spot for them. And on a winter's evening, when a hundred-strong flock streaks across the darkening sky like a green meteor, I can't help admiring their sheer chutzpah, and be thankful for the way they brighten up our dull city lives.



BELOW *There are fears that parakeets could wreak havoc on fruit crops and harm native species.* Alamy

Your sermons on integrity are a bit rich, archbishop, given your faith in Paula Vennells
Catherine Bennett, page 45

In thrall to Orbán and the hard right, Europe is facing its moment of truth
Simon Tisdall, page 49





James Munby

# Judges are sick of locking up children who need help. Yet still the state does nothing

Lack of provision for complex cases is a moral failure by our 'civilised' country, says a former president of the high court's family division

The BBC recently reported extensively on the rising and excessive use of deprivation of liberty (DoL) orders on vulnerable children. What was described is shocking and the stories they reported are heartbreaking. But this scandal is nothing new.

For many years, judges have been calling for urgent action to address the shortage of suitable care for children with significant mental health and behavioural needs, at the same time as they are being compelled to make DoL orders.

When a place for a child cannot be found in a secure children's home, a mental health ward or some other regulated therapeutic setting – usually because their needs are too complex, or there are not enough beds available – the high court can use the power under its inherent jurisdiction to deprive a child of their liberty in an unregulated placement.

A deprivation of liberty order is a draconian measure only ever intended to be used as a last resort. They have now become the norm. That they are being used in such numbers – 1,368 applications were made in 2023 – is a sad reflection of the catastrophic failure to provide suitable care for children with complex needs. Government has failed to address the dire lack of suitable provision in any meaningful and effective manner.

Almost seven years ago, in August 2017, as president of the family division, I had to do what little I could for X, a 17-year-old girl who regularly self-harmed and had made many attempts to take her own life. She urgently needed a place in a suitable therapeutic unit, but none could be found.

In a public judgment, I said: "What this case demonstrates, as if further demonstration is still required of what is a well-known scandal, is the disgraceful and utterly shaming lack of proper provision in this country of the clinical, residential and other support services so desperately needed by the increasing numbers of children and young people afflicted with the same kind of difficulties as X is burdened with.

"We are, even in these times of austerity, one of the richest countries in the world… It is a disgrace to any country with pretensions to civilisation, compassion and, dare one say it, basic human decency, that a judge in 2017 should be faced with the problems thrown up by this case and should have to express himself in such terms…

"If this is the best we can do for X, and others in similar crisis, what right do we, what right does the system, our society and indeed the state itself, have to call ourselves civilised? The honest answer to this question should make us all feel ashamed."

I went on: "If… we, the system, society, the state, are unable to provide X with the supportive and safe placement she so desperately needs, and if, in consequence, she is enabled to make another attempt on her life, then I can only say, with bleak emphasis: we will have blood on our hands."

As reported by Tortoise Media last year, X ended up locked in a high-security mental health hospital. Any help she received came far too late to save her. And seven years on from my judgment, the situation for other children countrywide is even worse than I had dared to fear.

In a case called Re T in July 2021, the supreme court called it a scandal. In January 2023, in a case called Re X, the current president of family division, Sir Andrew MacFarlane, in another published judgment drew "public attention to the very substantial deficit that exists nationally in the provision of facilities for the secure accommodation of children".

**A deprivation of liberty order was only ever intended to be used as a last resort. They have become the norm**

He commented: "Despite the regular flow of judgments of this nature over recent years, it is, at least from the perspective of the experienced senior judges who regularly deal with these cases, a matter of genuine surprise and real dismay that the issue has, seemingly, not been taken up in any meaningful way in parliament, in government or in wider public debate.".

Over the past seven years, there have been dozens and dozens of published judgments often expressing judges' concerns in unusually strong language. These judgments make grim reading. They paint a picture of a system unable to cope with the rising numbers of young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, almost always born out of trauma or neglect in childhood – a frustratingly well-trodden path leading to challenging behaviours, substance misuse, self-harm and the risk of sexual and criminal exploitation.

Desperate children are being detained, cut off from their families, with no contact with the outside world and without the therapeutic treatment they need so badly – as told in first-hand accounts to the BBC.

The voices of concerned judges, frustrated at the lack of options available to them, come through loud and clear. What have these judgments achieved? Nothing.

Journalists have been reporting on this for years. In May, there was a very disturbing account in the *Observer* about the appalling conditions in which "Becky" is being detained. What has all this reporting achieved? Nothing.

For the children who are being so gravely damaged by the state, and for their families who are being driven to despair, it must be a matter of indifference if the responsibility for this crisis lies with central government or local government or, as I would suggest, with both – though most of the responsibility rests with central government. Be that as it may, what of any substance and value has the state and government, done? Nothing.

This is not a hidden scandal. So, alongside the failures of state and government, society as a whole shares responsibility for failing to demand that something is done. If for too long the scale of the problem was largely unknown until the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory started collating and regularly publishing the data, the existence and nature of the problem has been no secret. Judges and journalists have been telling the public about it for years. Thanks to them, these young people are not hidden from view. But they are a long way from receiving the care they need.

When a system is routinely locking up vulnerable children in highly inappropriate settings because they are too difficult to look after, something is clearly going very, very wrong. It is yet another shocking moral failure – by the state and by society.

Is it too much to hope that it might be up for discussion in the election?

*Sir James Munby is a retired judge who was president of the family division of the high court (2013-18) and chair of the board of the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory (2018-23)*

# The Observer

*Established in 1791 Issue № 12131*

## D-day row

# *Sunak is driving the Tories over the electoral cliff*

'As we gather here today, it is not just to honour those who showed such remarkable bravery on that day … it's to listen to the echoes of their voices, to hear them, because they are summoning us." So President Joe Biden movingly told the international D-day commemoration ceremony at Omaha beach in Normandy on Thursday. But Rishi Sunak was not there to listen alongside Britain's wartime allies. Instead, he had departed France after taking part in the British commemoration earlier in the day, returning to the UK to do an election interview with ITV, leaving the foreign secretary, Lord Cameron, to represent Britain.

This will prove to be a defining moment of this general election campaign, because it tells us something fundamental about the man who, having been chosen to lead the country by his party a year and a half ago, is for the first time seeking a mandate from the electorate.

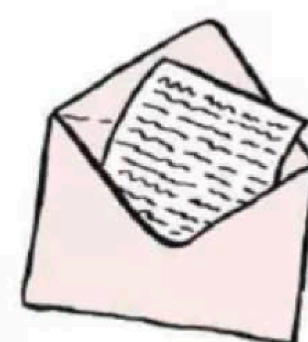
Just as the liberal democracies again face a growing threat – this time from enemies of freedom like Vladimir Putin – the prime minister should have been there with the leaders of the US, France and Germany to remember the bravery of those who helped rescue Europe from fascism 80 years ago. It is likely to be the last significant anniversary commemorations attended by survivors of D-day. That Sunak did not understand its significance, or the snub that his failure to attend would represent, casts a dark shadow on his appeal to voters to trust him to continue leading the country.

It was the worst moment of what has been a terrible campaign for the Conservatives. We welcome the fact that Sunak chose not to delay calling the election – the country needs the chance to pass judgment on a bleak era. Everywhere you look, there are signs that 14 years of Conservative government have changed Britain for the worse: from the rising levels of child poverty as Tory chancellors have deployed the tax-benefit system to redistribute from poor families with children to the more affluent; to the chronic underfunding of the NHS that has resulted in record waiting lists; to the laggard growth that has been further suppressed by a hard Brexit. And the first two weeks of campaigning have exposed the Conservatives for what they are: a party infected by populism that has run out of ideas to make the country better and so has to scrabble for desperate ploys to make the headlines, such as a scheme to force hard-pressed 18-year-olds to give up one weekend in four to do compulsory community service, and resort to bare-faced lies about imaginary Labour tax plans.

The polls suggest that this judgment will be punishing for the Conservatives: Labour's huge poll lead is widening. A monumental defeat on 4 July is exactly what the Conservatives deserve. They have taken an unenviable set of circumstances – a global financial crisis, a pandemic and increasing levels of conflict and insecurity – and through bad political decisions have further worsened Britain's prospects. The party's ideological obsession with Brexit has played a key role in its decline. By holding a referendum to satisfy the demands of the right, David Cameron fed the beast. It was by way of Brexit – first the campaign to leave the EU, then the internal party fight to impose a hard Brexit on the country, then the 2019 election campaign – that the party journeyed away from conservatism towards populism, telling voters that Brexit would solve all of Britain's long-term structural issues instead of making people poorer. It was via Brexit that the party arrived at Boris Johnson as prime minister, one of the worst leaders the country has ever seen. Brexit consumed the Conservatives, leaving a party that does not know what it stands for and has nothing to offer.

Nigel Farage's decision to assume the leadership of Reform UK and stand in Clacton will make the Conservative defeat worse than it would otherwise have been; unlike in 2019, Reform is standing candidates in Conservative-held seats and will probably split the vote on the right, boosting the size of a Labour majority. If the Conservative defeat is as bad as some are predicting, Tory MPs will face an existential choice. They can start to repair the damage that Brexit has done not just to the country but their party by trying to reconnect with the voters whose trust they have lost and rebuilding a form of conservatism suitable for the 2020s. Or they can continue along the path they have travelled since 2014 that has brought them to where they are today, by trying to ape Reform UK with anti-immigration rhetoric. That way electoral oblivion lies, but there is every chance that a hard-right rump from the parliamentary party and membership pushes them in that direction, alienating the electorate further.

To those on the centre-left of British politics, the temptation might be to shrug and say "so what?" But a healthy democracy depends on the interplay between government and opposition: it would not be good, in the long term, for a Labour government with a large majority to escape serious scrutiny because the principal opposition party has shifted further to the right and is racked by internal division. It will be incumbent on those Tories who believe they can one day again be a party of government by rebuilding the tradition of centre-ground conservatism to try to stop their party hurtling off the rails in the meantime.



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## Baillie Gifford

# *Retreat of literary festival sponsors is the writing on the wall for book lovers*

Even in bad weather, literary festivals can be magical: the gentle tap of rain on canvas as an audience tunes in to what it hopes will be another scintillating conversation. For some, this is a chance to clap eyes on a beloved author. For others, this is the place for discovering new voices, and afterwards to read their work, hot off the press. Questions are asked. Connections are made. Children are handsomely accommodated, whether they want to meet the Gruffalo or to climb the pyramids with Greg Jenner. In 2024, such gatherings are as vital a part of the nation's cultural diary as the FA Cup or the Proms – the only difference being that, in most cases, they cost a great deal less to attend.

But for how much longer will they exist, at least in their present form? Last week, following a campaign by the organisation Fossil Free Books, the fund manager Baillie Gifford announced it was to end its remaining sponsorship deals with literary festivals.

Such news was, perhaps, predictable. The Hay festival and the Edinburgh international book festival had already cancelled their arrangements with Baillie Gifford: Julie Finch, the chief executive of the former, said somewhat bizarrely that it wanted to guarantee the "freedom of our stages and spaces for open debate"; Jenny Niven, the director of the latter, spoke of the "intolerable pressure" on her staff. It was surely only a matter of time before Baillie Gifford walked away. Nevertheless, the anger, disappointment and anxiety among both the public and in publishing circles was – and is – widespread, and very real.

Baillie Gifford's precise sins are hard to fathom. While Fossil Free Books claims that the firm is implicated in "fossil fuels, genocide and colonial violence", its links to Israel seem only to comprise small investments in multinational companies such as Amazon and Meta, while only 2% of its overall portfolio is in fossil fuels (it invests far more in green energy).

But the bigger problem now lies with the future. Other potential sponsors – assuming they exist – are bound to ask themselves: does the business exist that is good enough – pure enough – for these campaigners? Big, democratic festivals are going to shrink, others may wither on the vine, and we will all be the poorer for it, including those writers whose threatened boycotts of some festivals precipitated Baillie Gifford's exit.

The UK's book festivals are part of an extremely fragile ecosystem. It has taken decades of hard work on the part of their organisers, as well as armies of local volunteers, to get them to where they are now, popular and vibrant. In an age of austerity, cuts and social fragmentation, their contribution to literacy and good mental health is increasingly significant. In a society where soft censorship is rife and free-thinking often shouted down, they provide a forum in which it's possible to debate and disseminate difficult, controversial ideas. But their value to writers, and therefore to literature itself, is also crucial. Only a very few authors can afford to turn down an invitation to a festival, should they be lucky enough to get one. Sales of books and of literary novels in particular, are vanishingly small; a couple of thousand copies sold will get you on the bestseller list. Most writers struggle to make a living.

Don't we know by now that what we lose, we never get back? Since 2010, almost 800 libraries have closed their doors, a fifth of the total. They sit, sad and empty, awaiting an offer from a hotel chain or developer. Whatever their original intentions, the activists and celebrity supporters of Fossil Free Books are in effect campaigning against both charitable organisations that do only good work in this country, and the life of its mind. They should be careful what they wish for.



# Andrew Rawnsley

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# In all this noisy election debate, why is there a conspiracy of silence about Brexit?

It is not so much the elephant in the room as the big fat hairy mammoth. Brexit is the most consequential thing the Conservatives have done since the last election. More, it is the most impactful legacy of their 14-year stretch in power. When the histories are written, every other failure of this Tory era will be a footnote compared with that epic folly.

With Partygate and all the other scandals on his watch, Boris Johnson recklessly tested Britain's tolerance for being governed by a prime minster who flagrantly debased standards in public life. With the maxi-disaster of her mini-budget, Liz Truss conducted a deranged experiment that exploded not just in her face, but blew the doors off the country. Ruinous to the Tory party's reputation as those episodes were, nothing has left a wound as deep, gaping and untreated as that inflicted by Brexit. Yet there's a conspiracy of silence about it from both the Tory leader and his Labour rival. It did not feature once, not even as an aside, in last week's 60 minutes of televised mouth-to-mouth combat between the two. Rishi Sunak, who advocated Brexit, doesn't want to talk about it for the obvious reason that none of the promises which accompanied that enterprise – "a new golden age" anyone? – has come true. He will also be aware that most voters have concluded it has been such a calamity for the UK that we ought never to have torn ourselves apart from the EU.

Reform, the reheated Brexit party, doesn't seem keen on the subject either. Since Nigel Farage played such an outsize role in making it happen, he ought to be made to answer for its consequences, but wasn't obliged to do so during Friday night's multiparty debate.

Given the odds that Labour will form the next government, it would be useful to know how exactly it plans to set about trying to salve the pain inflicted by Brexit. The party has vague phrases about sanding off some of the rougher edges of the departure deal, along with warm words about seeking a better relationship with our neighbours. But Sir Keir Starmer, though an ardent Remainer back in the day, is unlikely to say anything more substantial before he's inside Number 10.

Labour seeks the support of people who backed "out", especially in working-class areas of the Midlands and northern England, and the party's pollsters have cautioned the Labour leader that these voters really don't want to be made to think about Brexit. Sir Keir is leery of riling them by starting a conversation that makes these folk feel uncomfortable.

No one without access to a time machine can tell us what presently unforeseen crises will land in the lap of the next occupant of Number 10. But you don't need to be Doctor Who to know that there's a climate crisis that is increasing in severity and that a platter of chewy choices will be on the menu for the next government if net zero is going to be achieved to deadline. About this, as with so many other topics, the Tories are simply not interested in having a serious discussion. All they want to do is scaremonger about Labour compelling people to pay shedloads to install a heat pump. Labour is promoting its plan to create a state-owned clean power company, which it sells as a boost for jobs and energy security. What Labour isn't interested in, for fear of exposing its shins to a kicking from its enemies on the right, is engaging the electorate in a wider conversation about the tougher decisions that will be necessary to get to a sustainable future.

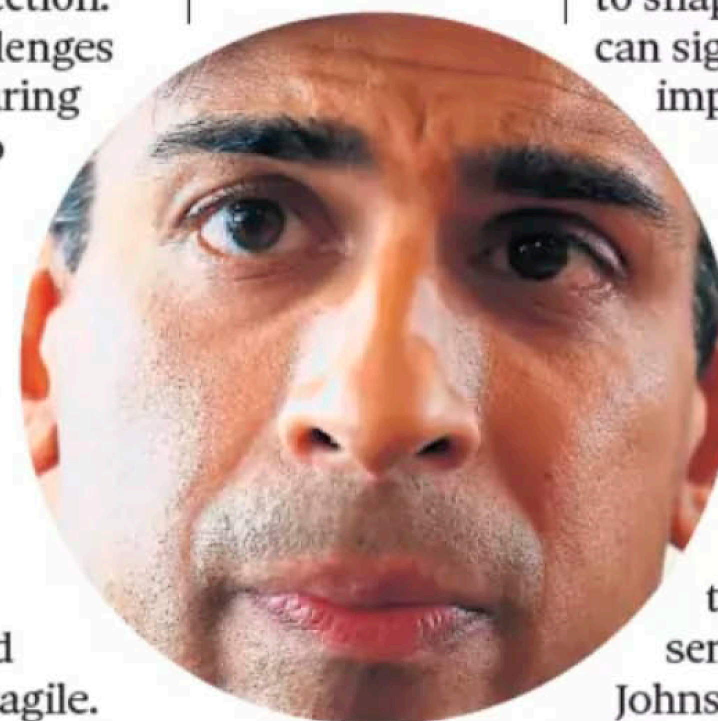
This is not my first rodeo. I know it sounds naive to complain about politicians being reluctant to talk about sticky choices and tricky trade-offs during an election. A grown-up conversation about the biggest challenges facing Britain is especially unlikely to happen during a campaign in which Labour sees no incentive to take any chances with its apparently enormous advantage and the Tories are limping so far behind in the polls that they are terrified of shedding what shrivelled support they have left. These questions, nevertheless, demand our attention because the dilemmas that are being ducked during the campaign aren't going to be avoidable by the next government.

A third tusky pachyderm pacing about the room is how Britain is going to repair its decayed public services when the national finances are fragile. Although the creaking state of the NHS, schools, courts, prisons and other key elements of the public realm are supposed to be central to this election, we are not going to have a full and frank conversation about how to revive them because this would entail having an adult discourse about taxation.

We are instead witnesses to the wearily familiar and reliably ridiculous game of "tax bombshells" and "dodgy dossiers" in which each party claims that it is being entirely upfront about its plans, while insisting that the other lot is secretly plotting to pick the pockets of the public. Mr Sunak's crude tax attack on Labour, one of the last shots in his depleted locker, has blown back on the Tory leader. A scolding letter from the top mandarin at the Treasury exploded as mendacious the claim that the costings had been calculated by "independent civil servants". That gave Labour a platform to denounce the Tory leader as a liar. Mr Sunak then made the mind-bogglingly stupid decision to cut short his attendance at the D-day commemorations in order to scuttle back to Britain to do a TV interview. This gift to all his opponents has forced humiliating apologies from the prime minister and given yet another reason for Conservative candidates to tear out what remains of their hair about the conduct of the Tory campaign and the judgment of their leader. He turned a week he wanted to be about Labour and tax into a week about him insulting veterans, snubbing world leaders and deserting his duty.

The claims and counterclaims about tax are anyway not impressing a jaded electorate that doesn't believe any politician on the subject. Only one in four voters trust Labour not to put up major taxes. That's a pitiful reward for all the effort Sir Keir and Rachel Reeves have put in swearing that they won't raise the rates of income tax, national insurance or VAT. Before any Tories get excited about that, just one in six people think they can be trusted not to raise major taxes.

The voters are right to treat everyone's claims with deep suspicion. Read my lips, no one is being candid about tax. It is utterly implausible that a Tory government, in the rather unlikely event that it is returned to power, could keep its promises to reduce tax without inflicting searing pain on critical public services that are already on their knees. It is stretching credulity to snapping point to suggest, as Labour does, that it can significantly improve the public realm without imposing some tax increases that it has yet to reveal.



'Rishi Sunak doesn't want to talk about Brexit for the obvious reason that none of the promises that accompanied that enterprise has come true.'

The debate we deserve is not the puerile one the politicians are having about whose figures are the more fictitious. What we ought to be talking about is how to modernise the tax system to make it more equitable and more helpful to growth. Thanks to the cowardice of successive governments, council tax is long overdue reform. Did you know that Buckingham Palace pays less in the property tax than a family in the average three-bedroom semi in Blackpool? It is hard to disagree with Paul Johnson, the director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, that this is absurd.

We also need to ask whether it is reasonable that capital gains are taxed much more lightly than earned income, an area that there is reason to think a Labour government will want to look at. Inheritance tax is riddled with exemptions that are lucratively exploited by the very richest. The thinktank Demos recently secured official data showing that a tiny group of the UK's wealthiest estates were able to shelter nearly £2bn of assets from inheritance tax in the 2020-21 tax year. That would buy you a lot of hospital scanners, operating theatres and A&E suites.

On tax, the discussion we ought to be having is about how to make it simpler, fairer and more efficient. Just as we should be talking about addressing the climate crisis and the best way to shape Britain's relationship with its continent. Taboo subjects for both the main parties on the campaign trail, these critical debates will be made to wait until we get to the other side of polling day.

# Simonds's view

CAMPAIGN MANOEUVRES…

ITV INTERVIEW

D-DAY 80

DAVID SIMONDS

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## Damned lies

From time to time, in this job, you have the privilege of meeting an individual whose vivid spirit stays with you. For me, one of those individuals was Jeremy Richman, who was among the bereaved parents of the Sandy Hook school massacre in December 2012. I spent a humbling day with Richman seven years ago, when he talked in detail not only about his daughter Avielle – he made a point of smiling every time he said her name – but also about the work he and his wife, Jennifer Hensel, were doing in her treasured memory.

Both medical research scientists, they had established a campaigning foundation to study the psychosocial factors that created mass killers, "so that other people might not suffer as we were suffering". In the months afterwards, we corresponded from time to time about the progress of the foundation's research, in chatty emails.

There was only one subject about which Richman would not speak, however: the utterly vile conspiracy theories spread on the Infowars YouTube channel by Alex Jones, that claimed the Sandy Hook murders had been faked by the anti-gun lobby; that Richman and his fellow grieving parents were "crisis actors" and their children were still alive. For all Richman's determined positivity, the fact of Jones's lies had seemed too much for him to bear.

In March 2019 I received, out of the blue, the shocking news that Jeremy Richman had taken his own life, the 27th victim of the tragedy. Since then, I have followed in detail the legal case brought by the Sandy Hook families against Jones, resulting, in 2022, in a $1.5bn (£1.2bn) judgment against him. Last week, after much cowardly evasion, Jones appeared to accept that he will be forced to liquidate Infowars to help compensate the families. In a shameful video he remained unrepentant; but at least, finally, in a small measure of justice, he may yet be broke. I raised a glass in Jeremy Richman's memory.

## Merde!

In a couple of weeks, the mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, will plunge into the Seine to prove that the €1.4bn (£1.2bn) of public money spent on cleaning the river for the Olympics has worked, and that triathletes can confidently follow her lead in the Games. This being Paris, the clean-up is less a cause for celebration than an opportunity to protest at its eye-watering cost and dubious success. A mass defecation in the river is planned, with the aim of giving the mayor a dose of E coli. One thought occurred: Liv Garfield, chief executive of Severn Trent Water, last month defended her £3.2m pay award in a year in which her company was responsible for more than 60,000 sewage spills, telling the BBC *Today* programme that the latter fact "really doesn't make me feel good". Surely there is one obvious way to test the sincerity of such apologies?



*Paris mayor, Anne Hidalgo, with swimmers on the banks of the cleaned-up Seine. Bertrand Guay/AFP*

## New era

On any given weekend you can take your pick of London walking tours: Jack the Ripper or Swinging Sixties, Paddington Bear or Sherlock Holmes, mostly at about £20 a head. Some guides, with an eye to the arrival of the Eras tour next week, have inevitably added Taylor Swift walks to their roster, taking in the locations from the singer's hit London Boy.

Satirical Swiftian inflation has obviously been factored in. Prices for a wander up from Camden Town to Highgate (where Tay met all her ex Joe Alwyn's best mates) are advertised at about £100 a time – or you could do it on the Tube for £1.90.



# Catherine Bennett

# *Your sermons on integrity are a bit rich, archbishop, given your faith in Paula Vennells*

Justin Welby has urged politicians to behave nicely. Shame he didn't do the same for the ex-Post Office boss


● *Justin Welby said Paula Vennells shaped his thinking.*

The archbishop of Canterbury moved with impressive speed when the general election was announced, to remind everyone to behave nicely. He urged people, "of all faiths and none", to prioritise, above all, "good grace and a commitment to truth and integrity".

By some miracle, the election news had already constrained coverage of a potential disincentive to listening to the further exhortations of J Welby: the appearance at the Post Office inquiry of Rev Paula Vennells, the former Post Office CEO and Church of England adviser.

Archbishop Justin, it is reported, once wanted this pious retweeter of his own insights to be bishop of London. True, Vennells didn't get the bishop job, she "stood down" as a part-time curate and is no longer the church's go-to governance authority, but while no Anglican archbishop would consider himself infallible, it can't help when a favourite is exposed as contributing to untold injustice and misery.

That's if Vennells wasn't more like a mentor. In the preface to his 2018 book, *Reimagining Britain: Foundations for Hope* (published after 555 postmasters had already launched legal action against the Post Office), Welby says she "shaped my thinking over the years". It was odd, you might think, for a spiritual leader to pay tribute to a CEO whose theological scholarship, even if she was inspired by King Solomon, seems limited to a part-time course and volunteer officiating. But perhaps Welby's Church of England is closer, spiritually, to L'Oreal, Unilever, Argos and other landmarks on the Vennells CV than the average non-believer can comprehend.

By the end of her recent cross examination, any claim Vennells might once have had to Welby's recommended "integrity" had, of course, been comprehensively trashed. Her "commitment to truth" didn't look much better. Why had this ordained minister told the business select committee in 2015 that remote access to branch transactions was impossible? After reports and warnings stating the opposite?

As for the "good grace" the archbishop urges us to cherish, the weepy Vennells would be reminded, among many inglorious episodes, of a "triumphalist" email from 2014. Following an item on *The One Show* about subpostmasters whose lives were devastated, Vennells said she had been "more bored than outraged". Unfavourable content was dismissed as "hype and human interest".

Around that time the C of E could still, possibly, have organised some coherent-ish explanation for ignoring hundreds of postmasters whose claims the Post Office, of which Vennells was CEO, was fighting. But even after a high court judge ruled, in 2019, that there was a "material risk" shortfalls had been caused by the system, the church failed to grasp that less controversial business experts might be preferable, if only for appearance's sake.

Over a couple of years, the respective timelines of Vennells in the secular world and Vennells at the Church of England, indicate, on the one hand, only causes for concern, on the other, continuing approval. In 2019, she was invited on its Ethical Investment Advisory Group, in 2020, she joined the archbishops' pandemic coordinating group, leading on governance; the Church Commissioners benefited too, from her "Lessons Learnt" commentary on a previous church buildings report. Reasons it failed, Vennells advised, included: "gaps in leadership and at times poor behaviours".

Imperial College NHS trust and Dunelm were also, inexcusably, recruiting her in 2019, the same year the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy successfully put her forward for a CBE. Grim. But Dunelm isn't telling political leaders to volunteer. Imperial College NHS trust isn't inviting the public, like the Church of England, to say daily pre-election prayers based on its edifying "thematic reflections". Day two, Integrity: "it is right that citizens should expect integrity, honesty and humility of those who wield power over the lives of others".

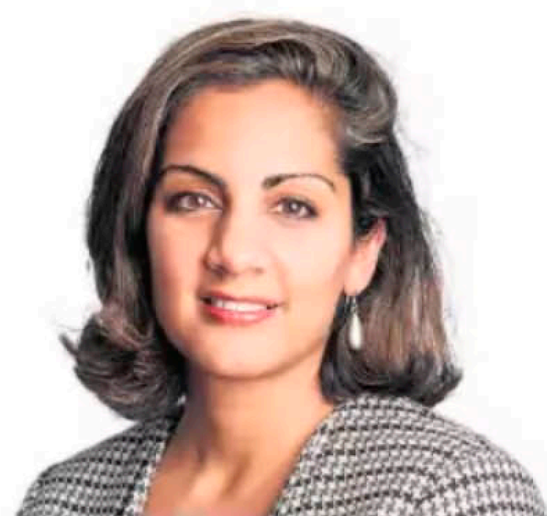
Vennells returned her used CBE before it was formally removed, the Cabinet Office later announced, for "bringing the honours system into disrepute". To date, the church has shown distinctly less interest than the UK's already blighted honours system in separating its own reputation from that of Paula Vennells, who retains holy orders. Welby concedes only that "more questions should have been asked" before she was given a series of appointments after the Horizon scandal emerged, such that "we will need to reflect on it". If Lessons have indeed been Learnt, there is little outward sign.

**Perhaps Welby's church is closer, spiritually, to Unilever, Argos and other landmarks on the Vennells CV**

Some clerics expect more. One, after the disclosure that Welby favoured Vennells for bishop of London, the C of E's third most senior role, called for his resignation. Another has tabled a private member's motion for Synod's consideration (if it gets the required support): "That this Synod, in the light of the central role of Paula Vennells in the Post Office Horizon scandal, and the comment by the archbishop of Canterbury that 'Paula Vennells has shaped my thinking over the years', request that a full review be undertaken of the influence of Paula Vennells on the culture, decisions, appointments, and strategies of the House of Bishops and the wider church."

As much as a non-congregant is probably disqualified from debating managerial as opposed to theological approaches to running an established church, it seems reasonable for religious outsiders to expect some explanation for his apparent misjudgment from Welby the House of Lords member, moral figurehead and busy, if unelected, politician. A recent *Spectator* interview was headlined: "Justin Welby: why shouldn't bishops be political?" It looks like we may have an answer.

That his recent contributions on Rwanda and the benefit cap have appeared enlightened, only makes seeming sustained indifference to a massive miscarriage of justice more incomprehensible. The association with Vennells continued long after the Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance said it was "stunned" by her CBE, awarded after the Post Office had "brought so much suffering". To be fair, numerous businesses were likewise unconcerned. Maybe, as the testimony of Paula Vennells has already indicated, we just expect too much virtue from prominent clergy. Lesson Learnt.



Sonia Sodha

# The law on single-sex spaces is a mess. It needs fixing, not political point-scoring

Labour's reaction to Kemi Badenoch's plan to define sex is a legally illiterate fudge

A friend of mine runs a residential writing retreat attended by women with experience of trauma and abuse. It is vital to those who take part that it is female only: past attenders have told her it enables them to talk about their experiences in a way they couldn't if men were present. But she has begun to worry whether excluding all men – regardless of how they identify – might put her at risk of legal action.

I put her in touch with an expert to explain the law in this area. The upshot: it isn't clear exactly when it is lawful to operate female-only services, and that ambiguity means she is right to consider the risk of being sued. For a freelancer it could ultimately be catastrophic. She may stop running the retreat.

It's the women who would lose out that I thought of when trying to make sense of the unhinged reaction to Kemi Badenoch last week saying the Conservatives would clarify the law. Lefty men with apparently zero understanding of the implications of this legal ambiguity jumped on the bandwagon to label as "ghastly" and a "transphobic crusade" the moderate proposal to clarify that the protected characteristic of sex in the Equality Act refers to someone's biological sex.

The clarification is sorely needed because of the way the Equality Act 2010 interacts with the Gender Recognition Act 2004. The Equality Act protects people against discrimination based on nine "protected characteristics" that include sex and gender reassignment. The Gender Recognition Act allows someone with a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria to apply for a gender recognition certificate (GRC) that entitles them to be treated as though they were of the opposite sex for some but not all legal purposes. It is unclear whether a GRC means someone male must be considered to be female for the purposes of the Equality Act; there are valid legal arguments on both sides.

What may seem like a legal technicality actually matters a great deal. The Equality Act includes exceptions that allow the provision of single-sex spaces, services and sports. If having a GRC means that someone male must legally be considered female, it makes the test for lawfully excluding someone male who identifies as female from female-only services significantly more complex. It means that it could be unlawful to exclude a male with a GRC from a lesbian support group. It could make it impossible for a care agency to honour a disabled woman's request for female-only intimate care, or for a woman in prison to refuse a strip-search from anyone male.



'To some, Kemi Badenoch is hateful and anything she says must be wrong.'

This really matters, because for many women the existence of single-sex services and spaces such as rape crisis centres and changing rooms is a matter of basic privacy, dignity and safety. This is particularly true given that some men who identify as female are open about deriving sexual fulfilment from doing so; that is their private business, but it is profoundly wrong to expect women to participate in that in public spaces. Moreover, while the legal test for excluding everyone male from a single-sex space may be fiendishly complex, it probably also constitutes unlawful discrimination not to provide female-only spaces and services to women who need them.

The law is a mess, and the situation is made worse by activists such as Stonewall who have taken advantage of the confusion to mislead people about what it says. How on earth are small organisations and people like my friend supposed to negotiate this minefield? I've spoken to several lawyers who practise in this area and all say the law badly needs clarification. The Equality and Human Rights Commission agrees. Spelling out that sex in the Equality Act means biological sex would make the law on single-sex spaces, services and sports much clearer, and so help organisations fulfil their rights and responsibilities to women. It would in no way undermine the act's important but separate protections against discrimination for trans people under gender reassignment.

There is so much to criticise the Conservatives for on women's rights and provision, but on this they are right, though they should have prioritised doing it before an election. So why the frenzied anger about Badenoch's proposals? It is the symptom of a mindset often found in those who spend too much time online, which drives them to see the world as a cartoonish set of heroes and villains. To them, Badenoch is hateful and so anything she says must be wrong. It doesn't help that there are many men, including on the left, who feel little empathy for women who don't want to be forced to undress or talk about their trauma in front of, or receive intimate care from, anyone male, regardless of how they identify. I also suspect that the heightened irrationality on display is a product of the different standards that black women are held to, whether they have the politics of Badenoch or Diane Abbott.

The polite way to describe the Labour response to Badenoch's proposal is "legally illiterate". The party claims that the law in this area is clear, despite the fact it is so unclear that, as the result of a judicial review that has made its way through the Scottish courts, in the next year or so the supreme court will have to try to interpret what parliament meant by "sex" in the Equality Act. Labour will argue that the problem can be fixed through statutory guidance, which is nonsense: guidance cannot change the law; only parliament can. Labour's position is to uphold the problematic status quo. If it goes ahead with its plans to make a GRC easier to get without first clarifying the law, it will make things worse.

But in a world where few journalists understand the laws and there is no shortage of people willing to express a zealous view based on vibes instead of knowledge, Labour has got away with it. Why expend political capital on solving a real and important issue when you've got pundits who will happily denounce it as the invention of an evil witch called Badenoch? It's a win-win situation: the said pundits get the thrill of fomenting their culture wars, even as they performatively call them out; Labour frontbenchers escape accountability for their hapless fudge. It's only the female survivors of rape and abuse who can't access single-sex services who lose out.



# Martha Gill

# D-day deserter Sunak didn't do his duty, so why should gen Z be expected to do theirs?

Postwar generations grew up in comfort on gilded tales of heroic conflict. What hypocrisy to push for national service for the young



RAF veteran Bernard Morgan salutes fallen comrades at the Bayeux war cemetery last week. Loïc Venance/AFP

Rishi Sunak is in an unfortunate position. Anything he does that even slightly cuts convention will now be read as a terrible blunder. Once a narrative like this picks up steam it is hard to stop. The press wants to add to the story arc. A delighted Labour will help it along. And perhaps even some of his own camp, looking for a scapegoat in the coming election defeat, will be rooting for him to fail.

There's really no spinning his latest gaffe. It's quite the decision to aim your entire campaign at those who care about the Second World War, and then to D-day ceremony, leaving veterans standing.

Is this match-fixing, you wonder? Some wild scheme – a Westminster version of Mel Brooks's film *The Producers* – to turn the campaign into a notorious flop and then somehow profit? The Conservatives have sacrificed their chances with wide swathes of voters in pursuit of a traditionalist core. Insulting war heroes is rarely a wise move. But here it may be fatal.

What we saw last week was bad politics and appalling ethics. But what stood out to me was the hypocrisy of it all. It was only two weeks ago that Sunak announced a programme of national service for school leavers. Among this feckless bunch, he said, he wanted to "foster a culture of service", "a renewed sense of pride in our country" and the urge to "contribute to their community". But now it is laid bare: Sunak is urging values upon the young that he does not share himself. As one interviewer put it to his face: "These men made the ultimate sacrifice, and you couldn't even sacrifice an afternoon."

The prime minister made a unique error last week. But there is something familiar about this story, which has the flavour of a three-part family saga: our middle generations, fearing they can never live up to their parents, unloading their anxieties upon their children.

There is a version of British identity – central to the Tory campaign – which is based entirely around the deeds of a generation that is now all but gone. Boomers grew up on gilded wartime stories and *Commando* comics, but went on to lead comfortable, unheroic lives. Gen Z catches the flak.

It is remarkable to what extent D-day has this year been co-opted to attack the young, mostly by people born decades after the war ended. Here's Nigel Farage at the launch of his campaign: "How is it that over 50% of 18- to 34-year-olds have never even heard of D-day?" Here's Lord (Shaun) Bailey deflecting criticism of Sunak: "We have a young generation that have no idea of our history, they hate the country." And it's not just politicians leaping on board. "As we remember the courageous D-day soldiers, I can't help but draw parallels with the young people of today," reads an article in the *Express*. Earlier this year the chief of the general staff, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders, floated the idea of a "citizen army" to bolster reserves. Large parts of the press were beside themselves with excitement: it was just what gen Z needed.

This is what comes of clinging to an idea of ourselves that is long out of date. It makes us insecure. Liable to lash out. The stoic, buttoned-up Brit who is "just going out" and "may be some time" no longer really exists except in novels and political speeches.

The reality is that Britain is now a nation of striving individualists, too cynical to be patriotic. Sunak dashing back from the beaches of Normandy to do a TV interview is symbolic of the times. The idea of duty and sacrifice no longer stir anyone's spirit – it would be an odd thing indeed if 18-year-olds rallied to the call.

After all, this version of the British character, with its stiff upper lip and readiness for battle, is a fairly recent idea, and was short lived. In the 18th century we were viewed by other Europeans as highly strung hysterics. Indeed, we cultivated the image: displays of sentiment were in vogue and we flung ourselves on sofas and committed suicide at the least provocation. It was only in the late 19th century that Brits started to pride themselves on their stoicism, an idea that reached its zenith in the blitz. It was useful to tell a nation at war that it was good at putting up with unpleasant things like war. Brits learned to think of themselves as conveniently frugal and phlegmatic, the sort that would sacrifice themselves without a murmur.

After 1945, however, there began a slow unravelling of the myth. Britishness splintered by age and by geography, and by the time David Cameron took office it was barely definable. A "belief in freedom, tolerance of others, accepting personal and social responsibility, respecting and upholding the rule of law" was his effort at placing the nation. Since then the failure of Brexit has for many severed the last ties of belief in their country. Our values lie elsewhere.

If our politicians want to change this, there are better places to start than hectoring young people. Homelessness among veterans rose 14% last year and help for those with complex mental health problems falls far short. Army pay could rise; accommodation for soldiers could be much improved.

Politicians in mid life could look at themselves and the example they are setting when it comes to serving their country. And what about some positive reinforcement? During the Covid pandemic young people lost out on jobs, education and social opportunities in order to protect the old. If Sunak wants to foster a spirit of duty and self sacrifice, he could start by thanking them.




## In the Observer: 12 March 1978

### Joan Juliet Buck on Steven Spielberg

Steven Spielberg was 26 years old when he directed *Jaws*, a film that rapidly made $200 million at the box offices of the world, thereby setting new records. It was incidentally a very good film.

Unlike other directors of his generation, Steven Spielberg learned his craft in television. While Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola were busy making violent features for Roger Corman, Spielberg was dealing with the formulas, taboos and schedules of episodic television. "I was learning about acting, technique, economy. TV taught me to plan."

Spielberg is not tall and has the unassuming looks of a friendly young professor. His wit is sharp, his self-deprecation acute. Like his films, he is unpretentious and to the point. Asked what his idea of Hell is, he says it's cleaning up the messes his dog makes. He still lives in a house with no view and has yet to hire a maid, though he recently bought himself a second Mercedes.

"I have never been competitive with myself and I don't have to top the success of *Jaws* with my new film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. *Jaws* made so much money that a commercial backlash ensued and people began to resent the film because of the abundance of its success. Had it been less successful by, say, $100 million, it would be remembered more kindly than it is now …

"Do you know that 51% of the American public believe that UFOs are real and over 15 million people have reported seeing them. The government doesn't try to shut people up about them but the phenomenon works as a deterrent in itself. When a man who's had a close encounter tells people about it, he gets a bad press.

"I read Jung on flying saucers; he's pretty much alone in that theory, but he's right: men need a God. Am I religious? I don't know. Go see my movie, you'll know. I think I do believe in God. I was brought up an orthodox Jew, but then movies became a kind of religious drive. I have all the Jewish guilts; I've been biting my nails since I was five. I don't smoke, I don't drink; it's just the finger nails."

# YOUR LETTERS

## Write to us

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## This week's issue
## What is socialism? Just look at the NHS

I agree with Will Hutton that the essence of socialism is fellowship, and it's easy to show what that can mean in practice ("Socialism isn't a dirty word. It's simply about wanting to make a fairer society", Comment, last week). The NHS is essentially a system of mutual medical aid with state funding, paid for by income tax – the more you earn, the more you contribute – which means it is firmly rooted in the socialist principle "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". It has been the most popular institution in the country for almost 80 years. People may complain about its performance (largely caused by Tory attempts to dismantle it), but how many of them criticise it for being socialist?

I'd like Labour politicians to pledge to apply the principles of the NHS to other state bodies. And if the Tories and the rightwing press scream that this is socialism, Labour should ask people how bad the socialism of the NHS has been for them.

**Charles Osborne**
Prague, Czech Republic

Will Hutton could have summed this up by quoting the great Liverpool FC manager of the 1960s, Bill Shankly, who said: "The socialism I believe in is everyone working for each other, everyone having a share of the rewards. It's the way I see football, the way I see life." It certainly accords with my view of life and politics, as the more unequal a society is, the less healthy it is. Maybe Keir Starmer, even as an Arsenal fan, should adopt Shankly's view.

**Dr Stephen Battersby**
Surbiton, London

### The price of entertainment

Tomiwa Owolade is missing some points in his piece about cinema and theatre ticket prices (Notebook, last week). The £20 ticket is all about the "luxury" experience – better seat, service, etc. Someone must pay for those extras, and the customer has a choice: £10 for the basic; £20 for the better. Theatre prices are the same. Putting on a West End play is expensive – not just actors but all the staff, maintenance, fixtures and fittings; not just the performance, either – rehearsals are required. In addition, unlike a film, the total audience exposure is limited. Therefore, the ability to recoup costs is equally limited.

**Chris Parr**
Putley, Herefordshire

### Don't bury Ed in the sand

I'm gobsmacked. Having just read Andrew Rawnsley's positive article on Ed Davey having to perform silly stunts to get any media coverage for the Lib Dems ("You can laugh all you like at Ed Davey's antics if they restore the Lib Dems' clout", Comment, last week), I was stunned that the *Observer* editorial on the social care crisis makes no mention of the Lib Dems at all ("Whoever wins, the social care crisis needs to be addressed urgently"). It says: "There is one pressing issue affecting millions of people that has been conspicuous in its absence from the general election campaign so far", ignoring the fact that Davey has sometimes been criticised for going on about social care almost to the exclusion of everything else.

**Jane Dards**
Caersws, Powys

### Make all schools meritocratic

Catherine Bennett is right to call out the rightwing media ("Must we pity put-upon parents sacrificing all to send their offspring to private school?", Comment, last week). However, I fear that she has overlooked the main purpose of that parental "sacrifice". It is not to achieve, as is so often claimed, the best possible education for their children but is, instead, to buy them access to privilege, elite networks, top university places, the professions, power and wealth. As a consequence of this money-led selection system, the public schools have been able to foist on to the nation the litany of egotistical "mediocracies" that have governed us over the last 14 years.

I would prefer it if Labour, rather than tinkering at the edges, had the courage to tackle head-on this systematic corruption of our society and bring the public schools into the state system.

**Mike Brown**
Essendon, Hatfield, Hertfordshire

### VAR: what is it good for?

Jonathan Wilson's detailed analysis of VAR's unintended negative consequences accurately identifies what has been lost for those football fans attending matches, ("Bad vibes and VAR: waiting game sucks out emotion and leaves fans disconnected", Sport, last week). This may be the case in the Premier League but not in the Championship, which functions perfectly well without VAR and so provides the most convincing argument against its continued use.

**Mick Beeby**
Bristol

### Easy target. Wrong target

You can't help but agree with Martha Gill ("Filthy lucre is everywhere, but book festivals are an easy target for protesters' fury", Comment, last week). Protesters gluing themselves to roads rather than petrol station forecourts; trying to stop cars and motorbikes rather than chaining themselves to cruise ships and private jets. And let's not forget the ones who attacked art works. Why?

Not only are they letting true villains get away scot-free, they don't seem to realise they are alienating large groups of people who might even support them if their protests were less haywire and more targeted. And so another fairly blameless and easy target – book festivals – will now be affected disproportionately by some idealised, misdirected version of climate protest.

**Dave Howard**
Hove, East Sussex

### Degenerative Toryism?

In "Now he thinks he's lost, Sunak's full of big ideas" (New Review, last week), David Mitchell said: "The received wisdom is that people get more rightwing as they get older." He could be recalling this letter published in the *Guardian* in 1970:

"Sir, young radicals, and indeed all those who would disagree with current government thought, are often assured that they will think differently when they are older. The implication is that radical thought is a normal, if immature, stage of development which is superseded well before middle age by good, healthy Toryism.

"Now it is clear that the average man over the age of 25 loses one million or more irreplaceable cells a day from the grey matter of his brain... I think we must seriously consider the possibility that Toryism, like osteoarthritis, is a degenerative disease. WF Jackson"

I keep a copy of this in my wallet.

**Tony Meacock**
Norwich

## For the record

● An article incorrectly said Nick Brown and Conor McGinn had been "blocked from seeking reelection after falling foul of strict disciplinary rules". In fact, while both MPs were suspended from the Labour party pending the outcome of separate complaints processes, no determination of wrongdoing was made in either case, as each resigned from the party in 2023 before the process was complete, criticising the quality of the investigations; McGinn had announced months earlier that he would not be re-standing, citing health and family reasons ("Starmer on Abbott: 'I've got more respect for Diane than she realises'", 2 June, p6).

● An opinion piece misnamed the Treasury minister Bim Afolami as "Ben" ("You can laugh all you like at Ed Davey's antics if they restore the Lib Dems' clout", 2 June, p43).

● Caithness and Sutherland, home to the Flow Country area of peatland, are not "in the most northerly part of the British Isles" (as readers in Shetland may attest), although they are at the northernmost tip of the British mainland ("Scotland's land of bogs and bugs in pitch for world heritage status", 2 June, p18).

● Owing to editing errors, a recipe for Pomegranate chicken indicated 150C fan/gas mark 3½ when 175C fan/gas mark 5½ was intended, and one for Chicken with red pepper and smoky parmesan cream gave an oven temperature of 160C fan/gas mark 4 when 180C fan/gas mark 6 was intended (Observer Food Monthly's "20 best easy chicken recipes" supplement, 26 May, p12 and p23).

● *Write to the Readers' Editor, the* Observer, *York Way, London N1 9GU, email observer.readers@observer.co.uk, tel 020 3353 4736*

## Britain's view on...
## The arrival of Taylor Swift's Eras tour in Scotland



**The Independent**
**'Planned when to pee'**

"Even now, in my 30s, I can safely say that I still relate to everything Taylor Swift has written about. Toxic female friendships, break-ups, depression, love ... the list goes on ... I honestly believe I'm as excited to see my favourite singer in Edinburgh as I was to get married ... I nearly threw up when my friend secured us tickets last year. I've had my outfit planned for months ... I've even planned when to pee between set changes, thanks to detailed Reels from fellow Swifties. I've actually kicked my husband out for the weekend, having pre-ordered Taylor Swift-inspired cookies for a pre-gig party. It's cool, he understands."
**Emmie Harrison-West**

**BBC**
**'Loch Tay Tay'**

"Trams have been decorated with her picture, Loch Tay has been rebranded 'Loch Tay Tay', and Edinburgh Zoo has named two newborn ... tamarin monkeys 'Taylor' and 'Swift'. ... It's easy to forget that the last time she played in the UK ... stadiums failed to sell out."
**Mark Savage**

**Sky**
**'Cultural juggernaut'**

"Something has shifted in the Swiftverse in the past few years. She now transcends even the highest echelons of pop fame, massively boosting everything from music sales to, well, the entire global economy. The Eras tour is a cultural and economic juggernaut."
**Gemma Peplow**

**The Sun**
**'Themed costumes'**

"We're digging out dusty bags of beads from the attic ... Groups of friends are planning themed costumes as if we're in Year 7 coordinating for a school disco ... and the WhatsApp pals' chat to organise our outfits has been in existence for almost a year." **Julia Atherley**



**Simon Tisdall**
Foreign affairs commentator

# *In thrall to Orbán and the hard right, Europe is facing its moment of truth*

With nationalists set for EU election gains, now isn't the time for a pro-Putin Europhobe to take the helm

Viktor Orbán was his usual poisonous self, spouting toxic twaddle in true Boris Johnson/Nigel Farage style. Hungary's hard-right prime minister and Europe's saboteur-in-chief warned supporters at a Budapest rally that, without him, their country would be overrun by millions of illegal migrants and cease to exist as a nation.

The EU was to blame, he said. The commission was under the spell of his liberal nemesis, the Hungarian-American philanthropist George Soros. It was secretly preparing to go to war with Russia over Ukraine. A vote for his ruling party, Fidesz, in this weekend's European parliamentary polls was the only way to keep the peace.

"We can only stay out of the war if Hungarian voters support the government," Orbán declared. "We must win the European elections in such a way that the Brussels bureaucrats in their fear will open the doors of the city to us and leave their offices in a hurry."

Orbán's slogan summed up the unsubtle approach of the EU's longest-serving, most subversive national leader: "Occupy Brussels! No migration. No gender. No war!" It's crude stuff, but it resonates in Hungary and beyond. Polls suggest Fidesz will win again, despite reinvigorated opposition led by a party turncoat, Péter Magyar.

Coming from Orbán, such cynically bonkers Europhobia is nothing new, but for one astonishing fact. He takes charge of the EU on 1 July. For six months, he will hold the rotating presidency of the council of ministers, which comprises heads of government and is the most powerful EU decision-making body.

Several phrases come to mind: fox in the henhouse, cat among the pigeons, poacher turned gamekeeper. It's a crazy arrangement. At a time of multiple global crises, when Europe's democracy, defences, prosperity and values are under siege, only the EU would risk such a leadership travesty.

Time will tell how Orbán uses this platform. Given his pro-Russia, pro-China leanings, opposition to military aid for Ukraine and EU enlargement, and long-running, financially penalised defiance of Brussels' judicial, civil rights and media standards, it could be bloody – and expensive. Orbán, a man unconstrained by principle, typically trades vetoes for EU funds and favours for his country.

No one individual personifies the Europe-wide struggle against the resurgent forces of rightwing reaction and regression better than he. Across the continent, radical parties, no longer marginal, are successfully weaponising visceral fears over identity, migrants, crime, green climate action, gender equality, "woke" culture, and economic and physical security.

Rightwing populist, nationalist or "sovereignist" groups are predicted to emerge as big election winners this weekend, though still behind the two main centrist coalitions. For them, Orbán is a role model. Unlike most on the hard right – Italy's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, excepted – he holds his country's top job.

Orbán plainly enjoys ruffling EU feathers. He recently cut a deal with Vladimir Putin on Russian energy supplies, ignoring EU sanctions. Last month he welcomed Xi Jinping to Budapest, praising China as a "pillar of the new world order" – even though the EU regards Beijing as a systemic rival and the Xi-Putin alliance as a strategic threat.

Orbán had kind words for another of the EU's least favourite people after paying court to Donald Trump in Florida. "He [Trump] has a very clear vision … He will not give a penny" in aid to Ukraine, he reported. Orbán opposes Kyiv's EU and Nato membership – and believes Brussels should be more supportive of Israel's war in Gaza.

All this could spark damaging ructions this autumn. Yet Orbán's most profound impact may be on internal post-election politics. With inexperienced people moving into top jobs in Brussels, his influence may prove crucial, especially over the anticipated consolidation of victorious far-right and hard-right parties into enlarged parliamentary alliances.

Like an over-large spider at the heart of a complex web, Orbán is already spinning Europe's future. He recently urged Meloni and France's National Rally presidential hopeful, Marine Le Pen, to create a hard-right "super group" to challenge the mainstream coalitions, the conservative European People's party (EPP) and the centre-left Socialists & Democrats (S&D).



*Viktor Orbán with Giorgia Meloni at a summit in Brussels earlier this year.*

Orbán's big idea seems to be that Fidesz and like-minded parties, such as Poland's Law & Justice (PiS), Spain's Vox and the Sweden Democrats rally around Meloni and Le Pen. "The future of the sovereignist camp in Europe, and of the right in general, now rests in the hands of two women," he told the French magazine, *Le Point*.

But policy differences, such as Le Pen's pro-Russia stance, and Meloni's hopes of morphing into an Angela Merkel-like "essential leader" of a rightwards-shifting Europe, could scupper his plan. Meloni's collaboration with the electorally challenged, centre-right commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, reflects wariness over the Orbán-Le Pen connection – and a broader split between the hard right and extremist headbangers such as Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD).

Fearing Orbán's coming, Belgium and Austria called last week for accelerated moves to suspend Hungary's voting rights. "One state in particular [is] increasingly adopting a transactional, blocking and veto attitude," Belgium's foreign minister, Hadja Lahbib, said. "This is a moment of truth … We need to have the courage to make decisions."

But suspension is unlikely, if only because it would set a problematic precedent. And there is some cause for optimism. "The first council presidency after the European parliament elections traditionally achieves little," wrote the analyst Thu Nguyen in *Internationale Politik Quarterly*. That's partly because newly installed commissioners and MEPs take time settling into their plush, well-upholstered seats.

How ironic that bureaucratic inertia in Brussels, not a principled fighting stand against the hard right, may save Europe from the worst of Orbán. Yet how dismaying, too, as new incarnations of 20th-century fascism stalk the continent and the world burns, that the EU should find itself in thrall to a man who both exploits and despises it.

## The world's view on...



### The election of Claudia Sheinbaum as Mexico's first female president

**Los Angeles Times**
**'Stretching the truth'**

"If Sheinbaum's penchant for stretching the truth is any indication, she will be as avid as her predecessor in employing the 'three Ps' — populism, polarization and post-truth — to consolidate power and further degrade Mexico's democracy." **Kristina Foltz**

**Al Jazeera**
**'Real winner is crime'**

"As Mexico now prepares for a new administration, it is safe to assume that violence, official corruption, and impunity will remain the name of the game. A woman may have won the Mexican election, but the real winner is organised crime — in every sense of the term." **Belén Fernández**

**Le Monde**
**'Dedicated to mandate'**

"During her campaign, Sheinbaum showed a more relaxed side than the rigidity she had previously displayed in public. But, according to her aides, she will run the country in the manner in which she has always worked: hard-working, rigorous, dedicated to her mandate." **Anne Vigna**

**The Conversation**
**'Toxic masculinity'**

"Sheinbaum inherits a very challenging responsibility. The second-best performing economy in Latin America risks being overwhelmed by cartel criminality … and surging violence against women … All Mexicans have been exposed to higher levels of criminality over recent years. But the country's women have been disproportionately affected. They have suffered from what is often termed toxic masculinity and the nation's dominant male chauvinist ideology … Every year, more than 3,000 women are murdered. And around a quarter of these are counted as femicide, where women are murdered because they are women." **Amalendu Misra**



# Kenan Malik

# *Playing the victim card is how elites game the system. Just look at Manchester City*

When the powerful pit themselves against the establishment, the goal is usually self-serving

If you want a metaphor for the state of contemporary politics, you could do worse than keep an eye on the football. Not Euro 24, the tournament that begins at the end of the week, though it should be gripping, but rather the off-field drama created by a legal case that Manchester City is bringing against the Premier League, a case that could have major ramifications both within and beyond the game.

The Premier League is the wealthiest national football league, and Manchester City the most prestigious club within it, having just been crowned champions for an unprecedented fourth year in a row. Last year it had the greatest revenue generated by any Premier League club, the highest commercial revenues, and the largest wage bill.

So, why is it gearing up for a legal battle? Because it wants to be able to spend even more money than it already does. And to do so, it wants to tear up some of the regulations that restrict spending in the name of more equitable competition, in particular the Associated Party Transaction (APT) rules, which insist that any commercial transactions made by a club with companies linked to their owners must not be artificially inflated but must reflect "market value".

All this may sound like an arcane issue about football finance of interest only to sports geeks, but it gets to the heart of much of what is wrong with the game. And in Manchester City's self-portrayal of its attempt to overthrow these rules, we catch a glimpse also of the perversity of contemporary politics. A club that stands at the pinnacle of the footballing elite presents its case not as a dispute among a group of mega-rich owners about how they apportion their riches, but as a downtrodden club that has, in the words of one fan account, "declared war on the entire football elite". It is an echo of how many within political debate also attempt to depict themselves.



Illustration by Dominic McKenzie.

Over the past 40 years, football has shifted from a working-class game often treated with contempt by the elite into a middle-class glory project and, for some clubs, a money-making machine; from a game described by the *Sunday Times* in 1985 as "a slum sport played in slum stadiums and increasingly watched by slum people" to "an optimistic, upwardly mobile, aspirational business", in the words of former Premier League CEO Richard Scudamore speaking to MPs in 2011. As football has become big business, so the kind of money flowing into the game has also transformed.

A watershed was the purchase of Chelsea football club by the Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich in 2003. In his 19 years as owner, until forced to sell in 2022 because of sanctions imposed after Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, Abramovich spent more than £2bn on player signings, turning Chelsea, who had last been league champions in 1955, into a sporting powerhouse, winning 18 major trophies, including five Premier League titles and two Champions Leagues.

Other billionaires soon followed. Half of Premier League clubs now boast American owners. Then the Gulf states and their royal families arrived on the scene, compared with whom even Russian oligarchs and American moguls can seem like paupers.

In 2008, Sheikh Mansour, a member of the Abu Dhabi royal family, with a family fortune of about $1tn, bought Manchester City. Three years later, the French club Paris Saint-Germain was acquired by the state of Qatar through a sovereign investment fund. More recently, in 2021, Newcastle United was taken over by a consortium led by Saudi Arabia's state Public Investment Fund. The British government reportedly put pressure on the Premier League to agree to the takeover so as not to "risk" British-Saudi relations.

The influx of money improved stadiums and made the game more cosmopolitan. It also ensured that the football itself – the skill, the beauty, the passion – became subservient to the product and the brand. The voice of the money men stifled that of the fans. On-field competition became distorted as the gap between the richest clubs and the rest widened. Smaller clubs were led to pile up debt in a futile attempt to keep up with the big boys, some going bust as a result.

In response, football's governing bodies introduced new regulations such as Uefa's financial fair play and the Premier League's profitability and sustainability rules (PSR) which aim to limit a club's spending and link it to revenues. Some of the richest clubs have in turn allegedly tried to game the system by artificially inflating revenues. Chelsea, for instance, recently sold two hotels to a company also owned by the club's owners – effectively, selling their assets to themselves – to avoid breaching PSR rules. Manchester City signed a huge sponsorship deal with Etihad Airlines – which just happens to be owned by the Abu Dhabi government.

The APT rules are an attempt to minimise such gaming. And they are what Manchester City wants to rip up. Already facing 115 charges of breaking Premier League financial rules, the club has adopted what some describe as "the nuclear option" – attempting to incinerate the regulations themselves.

The irony in all this is that the Premier League has been at the forefront of putting the needs of money men before those of fans, of treating football as a commodity rather than a sport, of serving the interests of the richest clubs and ignoring the wider interests of the game. The changes it helped incubate spawned both today's Manchester City, and its desire for a bonfire of the rules.

The echoes of wider political debates are not difficult to discern. In today's politics, too, struggles within the elite are often portrayed as challenges to the elite. Oppositional politics has been so hollowed out, and the public so disengaged from mechanisms of change, that maverick figures within the elite, from Donald Trump to Nigel Farage, from Marine Le Pen to Giorgia Meloni, politicians with reactionary policies on everything from immigration to trade union rights, can present themselves as challengers to the establishment, rather than an intimate part of it, and as providing a voice for the working class, rather than seeking to keep them in check.

Manchester City's legal challenge to the Premier League will be settled by an arbitration panel, and perhaps by the courts. Forging movements that can challenge the political elite will not come so easily.



## Insights
## Torsten Bell

Why some inheritance regimes are more unequal than others

Wealth is a big deal: household wealth in Britain has surged in recent decades to over £15tn. And it's unequal, with wealth inequality twice as high as income inequality.

This matters. What wealth you can inherit increasingly decides who owns a house and who can retire before their late 60s. Almost half of twentysomething first-time buyers receive financial support, largely from parents, averaging £25,000.

History shows the effects can be long lasting. In the 19th century, Germany had different inheritance regimes. In some areas, land was equally split between children; in others one lucky heir got the lot.

New research shows that this shaped wealth inequality in late 19th- and early 20th-century Germany (more people owned smaller farms in areas where inheritances were equally divided). But, while there was little income difference between areas with the two inheritance regimes at the dawn of the 20th century, long-term growth was subsequently higher in places with more equal land holdings. Gaps opened up in the interwar years as new industries (eg cars and chemicals) spread and grew postwar. Today, incomes are 6% higher in areas that started out more equal in terms of wealth.

Why? More people with some wealth expanded the pool of potential entrepreneurs who could take risks as the industrial revolution swept Germany, driving more patenting and people working in manufacturing. That supported the emergence of the Mittelstand of successful family-owned firms – which is when things get complicated, because families making profits from those firms means these places have less equal incomes today. Being more equal yesterday underpins places being richer, but also more unequal, today. Wealth, and its effects, last.

*Torsten Bell is Labour's candidate for Swansea West*

# Business & cash

**Gadget man**
Thibaud Hug de Larauze of Back Market
Profile, page 54



# Tesla leads charge to defend Musk's $56bn pay package

## Agenda

After the deal was struck down in court, investors will be asked to endorse it again this week, as *Callum Jones* reports from New York



*Musk at the opening of Tesla's German 'gigafactory' in Gruenheide in 2022.*
*Patrick Pleul/AP*

Tesla's shares are down 28% this year. It has warned of "notably" slower growth as sales in its second-largest market, China, fall. A defect forced a recall of its highly anticipated latest product. The chief executive spends a lot of time at other companies or generating controversy. How do you reward him? With a record-breaking $56bn pay deal, if Tesla gets its way at its annual meeting on Thursday.

Elon Musk's pay package – the largest ever granted to an executive at a US-listed company – is not based on Tesla's current, or future, performance. It was granted in 2018, and built around targets for Tesla's stock value, revenue and profitability.

The targets seemed steep at the time, but after three extraordinary surges – in Tesla production, demand for electric cars, and the group's share price – every goal was cleared by 2022. The company's transformation into the world's most highly valued carmaker propelled Musk into the ranks of the world's very richest people.

Back in January, a judge slammed on the brakes. Voiding the pay arrangement after a legal challenge by a Tesla shareholder, the Delaware court of chancery called his remuneration "an unfathomable sum", and questioned whether compensating Musk at such levels was necessary to retain him as chief executive and achieve the company's goals.

Tesla was not prepared to take that decision in its stride. "Elon has not been paid for any of his work for Tesla for the past six years that has helped to generate significant growth and stockholder value," Robyn Denholm, Tesla's chair, said in April, adding that the ruling had been "fundamentally unfair, and inconsistent with the will of the stockholders who voted for it".

The company organised a re-vote, urging investors to endorse the deal again. While the carmaker has sought to underline how the arrangement was tied to previous performance, the ballot is also seen by some as a referendum on the current state of the company, and Musk's leadership.

Denholm appealed to shareholders again last week, saying there was a risk Musk would step back from Tesla if they did not back his pay package this week. "If Tesla is to retain Elon's attention and motivate him to continue to devote his time, energy, ambition and vision to deliver comparable results in the future, we must stand by our deal," she wrote.

Denholm added: "This is obviously not about the money. We all know Elon is one of the wealthiest people on the planet, and he would remain so even if Tesla were to renege on the commitment we made in 2018."

Investors are being asked to endorse two proposals: Musk's pay, and the relocation of Tesla's incorporation from Delaware to Texas. Musk signalled he planned to do the latter after January's ruling, which prompted him to say that companies should never incorporate in Delaware.

Tesla is likely to win approval for Musk's remuneration, according to Dan Ives, an analyst at Wedbush, albeit "not by a wide margin". Many shareholders in the company "understand the biggest asset of Tesla is Elon Musk," Ives said.

The two largest proxy advisory firms – which advise investors on how to vote – have come out against Musk's pay. Glass Lewis and ISS both described it as "excessive", prompting angry responses from Tesla. Glass Lewis had used "faulty logic," it claimed, while suggesting that ISS had missed the point.

Beyond the ramifications for Musk's wealth, the vote over his pay will also test the power that proxy advisers wield over a company such as Tesla, which has a multitude of loyal supporters and Musk fans among its shareholders.

Tesla, and Musk, have mounted a high-profile campaign to ensure they win. Last month the billionaire shared a glossy video on X, which he claimed Tesla staff had made "of their own volition". It urged investors to "protect Tesla" by voting for the carmaker's proposals, warning that future growth was on the line.

"Tesla will ultimately be victorious in the narrative where, if it's not for Musk, we don't have the EV [electric vehicle] transformation globally that we've seen," said Ives. "He deserves the pay package: he executed.

"But it's at a time when Tesla is going through a difficult growth period. There's category 5 headwinds, and Musk has created a lot of noise and controversy, which has frustrated some investors."

Victory on Thursday is unlikely to end the saga. Shareholders who oppose Musk's pay deal are expected to challenge any effort to reinstate it.

## Postscript

### Billionaire brother walks out on Asda

The billionaire brothers who part-own Asda went their separate ways, with Zuber Issa selling his shareholding in the supermarket to the private equity firm TDR Capital amid a rift between the siblings. Zuber had owned 22.5% of the Leeds-based grocery chain, following a £6.8bn takeover with his older brother Mohsin and TDR Capital three years ago.

### ECB interest rate falls from record high

The European Central Bank eased the pressure on borrowers across the eurozone after cutting its main interest rate for the first time in almost five years. Citing a sustained fall in inflation, the ECB said its deposit rate would be reduced to 3.75%, from a record high of 4%, putting it ahead of the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of England, which have yet to cut interest rates.

### Public services 'near collapse', says report

Political parties must be honest about the crisis of collapsing public services facing the next government, according to a report that lays bare the problems facing the NHS, criminal justice system and local government. The Institute for Government thinktank said most services were "on the brink of collapse", and "substantially worse" than when the Conservatives took office in 2010.

### Autonomy founder not guilty of fraud

British tech tycoon Mike Lynch was found not guilty on all 15 counts of fraud he faced over the $11.1bn purchase of his company Autonomy by Hewlett-Packard in 2011. Lynch's trial began in March in San Francisco after a lengthy battle over his extradition. He was first charged in 2018, accused of inflating sales, misleading regulators and duping his eventual buyer.

## Vital statistics

**272,000**
*Number of jobs the US economy added in May – far more than had been expected.*

**£3.7m**
*Final pay and bonus package awarded by BT to its former chief executive Philip Jansen.*

*RIGHT*
*A vision of the future in Sunderland city centre, where the riverside area is being transformed.* Richard Saker/ The Observer

# Centre forward: Sunderland's revival plans aim to bring jobs and homes to inner city

In the 1980s Thatcher helped attract the likes of Nissan to the region, but it could not revitalise the city itself. Now a new industrial strategy, backed by the local council, is aiming for more sustainable results. By Jasper Jolly

When Richard Marsden looks across the Wear gorge to the centre of Sunderland, he has never seen so many cranes. His design and build firm, BDN, is rushing to renovate an old stable block in the shadow of the city's football stadium.

"Now there's a bit of a resurgence, I want to be part of that," he says of Sunderland, as joiners and carpenters fit out bars and a microbrewery ready for the new season.

The 140-year-old building was once the stables for horses used to take coal to the railway from the mines directly beneath what is now Sunderland's Stadium of Light. For years the stables stood derelict, roofless and neglected, only a few hundred metres from Sunderland's city centre – albeit on the other side of the deep river gorge. Marsden is hoping those days are over.

His bet is not a one-off. Sunderland's gorge-top skyline is changing rapidly as the city's leaders try to reverse decades of hollowing out of the city centre. It is an experiment in local government intervention, and also in a form of industrial strategy that looks to cities and the UK's dominant services economy as well as eyecatching factories as a way of reviving the sluggish economy.

Sunderland's leaders are hoping that the intervention can serve as an example for other parts of the country. If it succeeds, it could also be watched with interest by Keir Starmer, who, polls suggest, will lead a Labour government working out its approach to industrial and economic strategy.

Some Labour activists have expressed frustration over what they describe as a lack of difference with the Tories, particularly after the party backtracked earlier this year on green investment plans. But the election still offers a clear choice between the parties, with the Conservatives under Rishi Sunak excising any reference to industrial strategy, and going cold on the "levelling up" agenda to address regional imbalances.

## The Nissan model

Sunderland is already a beacon for one type of industrial strategy. In the early 1980s Margaret Thatcher played a key role in persuading Japan's carmakers to build factories in the UK. Nissan chose Sunderland for its plant, bringing thousands of jobs that helped to fill the gap left by the decline of shipbuilding and coal mining.

Nissan's factory is now seen as arguably the most successful example of British industrial strategy, spurring an automotive supply chain in the north-east and persuading rival Japanese carmakers Toyota and Honda to follow it to the UK.

The Conservative government under its four prime ministers since Brexit – including Sunak, despite his apparent aversion to the idea of industrial strategy – has pursued a similar approach. It has delivered juicy subsidies to Nissan to persuade it to upgrade its factory to produce electric cars. In the factory, workers talk of their pride – tinged with relief – that the plant will be part of the electric vehicle revolution.

Nissan is investing hundreds of millions of pounds to increase the productivity of the plant, with robot arms that wave an elegant pattern to cover car bodies with paint, and upgraded car carriers able to hold the extra weight of a battery as workers slot fittings in. The automated lines move constantly on by far the UK's busiest production line: of the 905,000 cars made in Britain in 2023, a third were produced in Sunderland.

The battery maker Envision AESC, a Chinese-Japanese joint venture, is also building two giant "gigafactories" next door to supply the car industry.

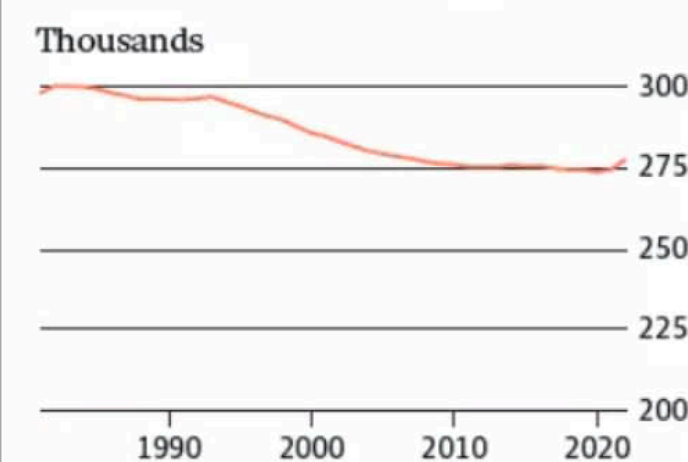
Paul Swinney, director of policy and research at Centre for Cities, a thinktank, says Nissan's arrival on the edge of town in the 1980s was a "good thing because the city was in a pretty bad place when they came in".

The cluster of Japanese companies in the surrounding area is evidence of how one inward investment can lead to more. But attracting one big company is not enough to sustain a city, says Swinney, who also happens to be from Sunderland. (Centre for Cities is based in London.)

"The key thing about Nissan is that Sunderland is still in need of being levelled up 40 years on from Nissan coming in," says Swinney. "It hasn't really shifted things. We're still in the same problems."

Clear evidence of discontent with Sunderland's economic lot came in 2016. Concerns over Brexit disruption to Nissan made Sunderland a symbol of the tensions at the heart of the referendum. That was confirmed when images of a Vote Leave

**Sunderland's population**




Source: ONS



*LEFT Architect Richard Marsden of BDN at Sheepfolds stables, a new leisure space.*



*RIGHT Council chief executive Patrick Melia shows off plans for the new city centre, including images of a revived riverside development, below. North News & Pictures; Sunderland city council*

## Ha'way for Hollywood

A new film studio on the banks of the Wear could have a bigger impact on the Sunderland economy than the giant electric car battery "gigafactories" that are under construction, according to the producer behind the plan.

Leo Pearlman (pictured) is behind an ambitious project to build a production complex a mile from Sunderland's city centre that could create 8,500 jobs.

Sunderland city council granted the £450m project planning approval in March. The development is being carried out by FulwellCain, a joint venture between Pearlman's production company, Fulwell 73, and Cain International, a London investment firm.

Pearlman wants the government to think of support for the UK's services economy (which far outstrips British manufacturing on every measure apart from hard-hat photo opportunities) in the same way as it does for factories. The nearby gigafactories being built by Envision have garnered grants and loans worth hundreds of millions of pounds.

Pearlman says of Crown Works Studios: "This is a factory – that's exactly what it is. The impact that it will have is exponentially bigger than a gigafactory, for example."

Sunderland is not the only city to aspire to be the Hollywood of the north of England, and a glut of film studio projects in the UK has led to concerns that some could fall through. Some in the industry are also fearful that generative artificial intelligence, which can also produce realistic video using only



text prompts, may limit the need for studios to build large sets.

However, Pearlman says the UK needs a second major production hub – "an Atlanta" to London's Los Angeles. The UK has so far ceded the opportunity to have Europe's No 2 filmmaking region to rivals such as Budapest in Hungary, he argues.

Although he is Sunderland-born – Fulwell is an area in the north of the city – Pearlman says that the decision to go for Sunderland was made on the city's merits.

Sunderland council "went at it really hard as a local authority" when it heard about the plan, says chief executive Patrick Melia. It also worked closely with the company to secure national government support.

Pearlman says he believes the studios could bring a buzz to Sunderland not seen since the heyday of the shipbuilding industry.

"I've never experienced in my lifetime the uptick in Sunderland right now," he says. "You can't move for new developments."



supporter borne aloft with her arms raised on referendum night were shown around the world.

Unlike in some parts of the so-called red wall, Labour's three MPs for Sunderland held on to their seats in the 2019 wipeout.

Labour's Kim McGuinness knows that her job is to deliver for voters who rejected the status quo in the 2016 referendum, and again four and a half years ago. She was elected last month as the first mayor of the North East Combined Authority, which stretches from Northumberland to Durham, via Tyne and Wear.

She is a keen proponent of devolution, which she believes has not gone far enough, leaving cities such as Sunderland struggling for attention from Westminster.

"It's about determining our own priorities," she says, such as her immediate move to take the region's bus network under public control, and extending the Tyne and Wear metro to nearby Washington.

While Nissan, which sits between Sunderland proper and Washington, has been a success, its nearest city been unable to fully capitalise on that economic boom. Many of the 6,000 workers at the factory commute from outside the city – in some cases they live far away.

Sunderland's decline in the second half of the last century was "particularly comprehensive", according to a 2009 Centre for Cities report, because of a reliance on coal mining, shipbuilding and glass manufacture (the city hosts the National Glass Centre). It also suffered from the larger gravitational pull of Newcastle, its close neighbour, which won much of the growth in financial and business services.

McGuinness highlights the challenge of child poverty in particular, which she blames on underinvestment by government. Seven of Sunderland's city wards are among the 1,000 poorest of England's 32,800 wards, according to the government's indices of multiple deprivation.

People moved out, as it was easier to build on greenfield land outside the historic centre rather than brownfield land in the middle of town left by departing industry and older housing. The council built an out-of-town business park, Doxford International, to host call centres and back offices for the likes of Barclays bank and the mobile network EE. The business park has a sculpture referring to the city's shipbuilding past, but in truth the expanses of car parks and utilitarian offices could be anywhere.

### Reviving the riverside

The city's new plan is a 180-degree reversal. It will put 1,000 homes right by the River Wear, alongside office developments, plus a hillside park to make the underused riverside more attractive.

The site itself was formerly the giant Vaux brewery, until that was knocked down in the late 1990s. Supermarkets considered buying it, but the council eventually decided to make it a central focus, opening a new city hall there in 2022.

Patrick Melia, Sunderland city council's chief executive, says the authority wants to double the population and number of jobs in the city centre. (Only 1% of the population lives there now.) It has aggressively courted private sector investments, as well as the limited pots of levelling up money from central government where they have been available.

"We knew we wanted a diversified economy," he says, standing beside a model showing the new city centre as the council imagines it, pointing to the mix of proposed housing, offices and a new eye hospital. The council fights hard to keep Nissan, but "we didn't want to be all in automotive and advanced manufacturing," he says.

Usually a Marks & Spencer closing down is a bad sign for a city centre's prospects, but in Sunderland Melia says the council is planning to knock down the ageing building and replace it with the second phase of offices.

It has revived an old fire station as a theatre and restaurant, and is also seeking to link the developments for pedestrians, who will be able to walk easily from the high street to central Keel Square – overlooked by the headquarters of Hays Travel – and across to the new development.

John McCabe, head of the North East Chamber of Commerce, welcomes the focus on attracting services jobs, as well as the support for the factories on the city's edge that garners the most attention.

"There's got to be a place for both," says McCabe. "It would be ill-advised to put all of your eggs in one basket. For probably too long we thought, 'as long as Nissan is there, that'll be OK.'"

Local authorities have been through cash-straitened times of austerity since the Conservatives first took power in coalition with the Liberal Democrats in 2010. Under financial pressure, some councils – notably Woking in Surrey and Thurrock in Essex – were lured into bankruptcy by commercial property that promised high returns but ended up as unfinished monuments to local politicians' hubris.

Melia is confident that Sunderland will avoid that fate. For one thing, unlike some of the disastrous council schemes, the riverside plan has attracted £100m in funding from Legal & General, a major stamp of approval from the UK's biggest investment manager. Nigel Wilson, L&G's influential former boss, cited it as an example of the investor backing the UK economy.

A new footbridge links the new offices directly in a straight line across the river to the Stadium of Light. Sunderland AFC has the ninth-largest football stadium in England, even if it has faltered during seven years out of the top flight (including a disastrous double relegation). But the fans keep coming. The bridge will make landfall right by the Sheepfold Stables in 2025, providing what Marsden hopes will be a steady stream of punters looking for somewhere to have a drink on match days. But he also hopes to attract people from outside Sunderland.

> *'It's starting to look like a proper city. You can almost see the tide turning but it's got a long way to go'*
> **Ian Wright, film-maker**

Another key part of the city's hopes is a mile up the Wear, where Leo Pearlman, the Sunderland-born co-founder of the production company Fulwell 73, is behind Crown Works Studios, an ambitious plan to create 8,500 film and TV jobs in the north-east. That could diversify the economy further. (See panel above.)

Small business owners are starting to feel a difference in the mood. Ian Wright, whose New World Designs uses arrays of cameras to make Matrix-style "bullet time" videos, says his sports and fashion advertising clients "can't grasp how desperate it was" for the city once industry left. He arrived in Sunderland in 1999 to study, but his adopted city was "derelict" and "dead". Resentment about the lack of investment and local budget cuts fed the Brexit vote, he believes.

Wright is relatively optimistic about Sunderland's future, and the media businesses that could come if Crown Works Studios succeeds.

"It's starting to look like a proper city," he says. "It's the first time seeing that many cranes. You can almost see the tide turning." Yet he cautions that "it's got a long way to go".

The true test of Sunderland's success will not be the factories, however impressive they are, but whether higher-paying jobs come. Nissan again offers a salient example. It provides good manufacturing jobs in Sunderland, but many of the best-paid engineering and design roles are in London or Cranfield, Bedfordshire.

"Would [a company] put its high-value stuff as well as its low-value stuff there?" asks Swinney. "If the answer is 'no', then you haven't levelled up."

Profile

# Thibaud Hug de Larauze

## Chief executive of Back Market

The co-founder of the secondhand tech marketplace says sales are booming not just because people need to save cash, but because they care about waste, writes *Sarah Butler*



*Hug de Larauze: 'If you really want to transition people to repair ... it takes a village, and it takes, especially, manufacturers.'* Julie Glassberg

Thibaud Hug de Larauze is waving his iPhone, boasting that it is more than seven years old. "It works great," he says. Not what you'd expect from a tech entrepreneur heading one of France's biggest "unicorn" startups – Back Market – which has raised more than $1bn to expand into 18 countries.

The chief executive of the secondhand gadget marketplace says he would rather identify as an eco-warrior than a tech guru, fighting to persuade us all to buy pre-owned phones, laptops and other devices, and repair or recycle our old ones.

New technology contributes more than 1bn tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions a year, just under 3% of the global total, making it the seventh biggest contributor – about half the size of the fashion industry – according to Our World in Data.

Mending a smartphone just once can save more than 77kg of carbon emissions, research by the French ecological transition agency Ademe has found, helping to lighten our impact on the planet, solve a gigantic electronic waste problem that equates to more than 60m tonnes a year globally, and reduce the need to mine scarce resources, including gold, platinum and palladium.

"It's a big driver to wake up and at the end of the day ... know that I'm trying to achieve something that is positive," Hug de Larauze says. He says that what he likes about the company is that it doesn't compromise values for value. "The more we grow the business, the best it is in terms of impact."

The group, which has headquarters in Paris and Bordeaux and employs 700 people globally, expects to deliver its first annual underlying profit this year, shortly after its 10th anniversary in November. Sales continue to surge, on the back of 45% growth last year to €320m (£270m), which makes the company about a quarter of the size of UK online electrical goods retailer AO.

The UK, where Back Market opened for business four years ago, is now its fastest growing country – with sales up 80% year on year. The group holds 44% of Britain's online refurbished tech market, rising to more than half for smartphones. Hug de Larauze says interest has surged in the UK because people are "fighting inflation and so looking for options to basically save money on tech", but also because they are "very sustainability-oriented". "E-waste is a big topic; it's something that matters to people."

Back Market – now a certified B Corp, which guarantees certain ethical standards – was founded in 2014 by Hug de Larauze and two friends, Quentin Le Brouster and Vianney Vaute. He says the launch was inspired by working with refurbishment specialists who were selling their wares on the likes of eBay.

Hug de Larauze felt refurbished products needed a higher profile and smoother sales experience to give shoppers more confidence. They may be cheaper and greener, but refurbished items are up against household brands and "there was a big trust gap between those two worlds that needed to be filled".

Having started selling smartphones only in France, Back Market now sells 200 different types of refurbished gadget – from smartphones and laptops to baby monitors and gaming consoles – in 18 countries. These include the US and much of Europe as well as Japan, South Korea and Australia, with 4.5 million new customers last year taking the total to more than 13 million since launch.

Back Market does not acquire or hold stock, or carry out refurbishment itself. It works with 1,700 traders and refurbishers who are rigorously screened before they are allowed to list. Sellers get their products from a mix of sources, including telecoms companies that offer trade-ins and upgrades to clients.

Last year, after several rounds of funding, with money to fuel growth pumped in by the likes of Goldman Sachs and the Airbnb and Spotify investor Aglaé Ventures, Back Market decided to shift focus to making a profit. It is now funding itself, after interest rate rises and a weak IPO market meant sources of new cash became less promising.

While a flotation is not completely ruled out, Hug de Larauze says new cash is not needed to continue expansion. He is confident the group is on a trajectory to book a profit in December. It has pulled back on hiring and has paused entering new territories or product categories to make the most of its established position.

Back Market's growth comes not only from its existing markets, but also from new services such as trade-in on certain products in the UK, France, US and other markets, and recycling, which is being tested in France. Hug de Larauze says he wants to offer the public a method of getting rid of unwanted tech in an easy, and potentially profitable, way rather than letting gadgets build up in a drawer. Buying back or offering to recycle items also provides a steady stream of products for Back Market's army of refurbishers.

With households in the UK each now hoarding an estimated 30 broken tech items – up from 20 four years ago, according to Material Focus – there is clearly lots of scope for such services. Further change is being driven by "right to repair" legislation, which will come into law across the EU by 2026, forcing manufacturers to make spare parts available for phones and tablet computers as well as kitchen appliances.

In the UK, where we dispose of 2m tonnes of electronic waste every year, right to repair legislation was introduced in 2021. However, it only covers a handful of items including large kitchen appliances and TVs.

Hug de Larauze wants legislation to go further: "If you really want to transition people to circularity and/or repair, making devices last longer, you need to involve everything. It takes a village and it takes, especially, manufacturers. It could include designing the products [with repair or longevity in mind], starting to sell the spare parts, or enabling people to fix stuff more easily."

Further legislation, under which electronics producers and retailers are being asked to pay more towards the collection and recycling of the items they sell, is also welcomed. However, the Back Market boss says the UK's system needs tweaking so that repair is considered as the first option before recycling.

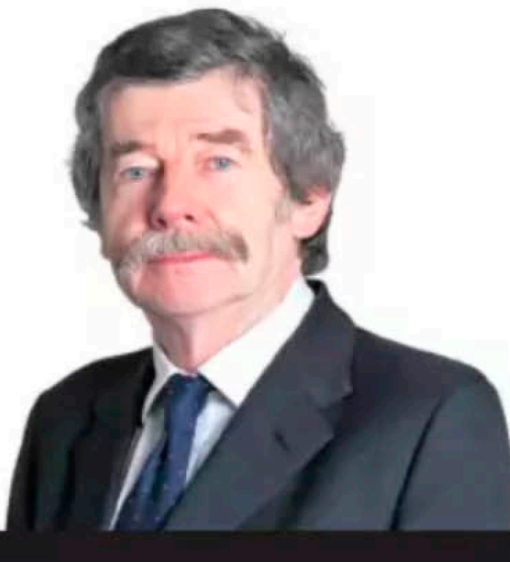
"People would love to be able to purchase those products," he says. "It should be a right for everyone to be able to fix the product that they have and to use it longer."

### Executive summary

**Age** 36
**Family** Married, three daughters.
**Education** French high school in Canada; school of management at the IÉSEG *grande école* in France.
**Pay** Not disclosed.
**Last holiday** In Brittany, in the Gulf of Morbihan near Vannes.
**Biggest regret** "I have no regrets. Except maybe for the fact that I didn't become a pro tennis player."
**Best advice he's been given** "Be ambitious and cautious, and listen to the subtle signals."
**Phrase he overuses** "Super, super – but how do we move it to the next level?"
**How he relaxes** Sailing; tennis; being close to the ocean; and playing with his daughters on the beach.

# William Keegan

@williamkeegan



## If Labour is a racing certainty, it faces some big hurdles

On the day before the 1992 general election, the bookmakers at Ascot were offering odds of 6-1 against John Major's Conservatives winning. I was with the economist Roger Bootle, and we agreed that Labour, well ahead in the polls, was bound to win. It was pointless betting on the Tories, even at those odds. When the results came in we kicked ourselves.

When I told Lord Kinnock, the Labour leader at the time, this story years later, he jokingly said I should have telephoned him from Ascot. He said that on driving back from canvassing in south Wales the previous week he and his wife, Glenys, had had an uneasy feeling that, notwithstanding the polls, the election was "slipping away" from them.

We come now to the imminent general election on 4 July, the campaigns for which already seem to be boring, not to say annoying, so many people. Labour has been consistently ahead in the polls, while the fissiparous Conservatives are widely considered to be heading for a historic defeat.

This time the bookmakers' odds are very different. At the time of writing they are quoting 30-1 against the Tories, while Labour is on 1-41 to win the most seats – that is to say, a £41 bet on Labour would fetch you a mere £1. Most people seem to think that Labour is a racing certainty, even though they don't regard Keir Starmer as inspiring.

The nation has had enough of the impact of austerity, not least on the NHS. And Brexit is proving a bigger disaster by the day. The self-harm of removing freedom of movement is affecting so many areas of life and bureaucratic restrictions on trade are causing serious damage to business, and therefore to us customers.

The two major parties have made the very topic of Brexit a no-go area – the Tories because they are responsible for it and Labour because, though it was right about Brexit, it is frightened of alienating the so-called red wall voters who deserted it last time.

We are having a general election five years on from a landslide Conservative victory, won on the back of the slogan "Get Brexit Done". Well, the Tories got it done, and now they are done for.

Brexit has produced casualties all over the place. Even as I write, the unsurprising news comes over the airwaves that Labour's plans for a major housebuilding programme are likely to be hampered by a shortage of construction workers caused by the xenophobic attitude towards our former European partners, resulting in an exodus of east European building workers.

Now, I say Labour's plans because – notwithstanding my cautionary tale about the 1992 election, the result of which has haunted Labour ever since – there can be little question that the Conservatives are in for a drubbing on 4 July. People have, frankly, had enough.

His lies about Labour's tax plans are only one of the many own-goals Rishi Sunak has inflicted on himself. True, the Liz Truss fiasco has damaged the Tories – for which Sunak was not responsible – but it was not just that. This government has been found out, as the accumulated damage of austerity since 2010 hits most people in one way or another.

Sunak was a Brexiter from the start. The dramatic negative impact of leaving the single market has shown up in the nation's miserable growth performance. The Centre for European Reform has estimated that UK annual tax revenues would have been about £40bn higher if the country had not left the EU. These losses have impelled both major parties to deny that they plan to raise taxes, and the British public to tell pollsters they believe taxes will be raised anyway. As Robert Shrimsley of the *Financial Times* says: "The Conservative party has become the last casualty of Brexit."

It was symbolic of the low to which the party has sunk that the prime minister had to apologise for leaving the D-Day commemorations insultingly early to attend a television interview in London where he denied lying about Labour's tax plans. As one friend of mine quipped: "Finally a [Brexit] prime minister apologises for leaving Europe."

Brexit is fast becoming a tragedy. As what has happened since D-Day reminds us, the stability and peace in Europe since the second world war are the achievement of an economically united Europe – until the Brexit catastrophe.

The Russian moves in Ukraine, and fears of further revanchism by Moscow in eastern Europe lay a huge responsibility on a Starmer government.

Economically, Starmer's ambitions for growth require a closer relationship with the EU, not least the single market. And to meet the wider geopolitical threat, especially if a future President Donald Trump distances himself from Europe, we in the UK need to stop distancing ourselves.




*Be sure to check every detail immediately after making a flight booking as correcting a mistake can prove costly.* Alamy, PA

# 'I felt like a cash cow': the simple flight booking error that cost a BA customer more than £730

When Raluca Hamilton was arranging family holidays, a computer autofill error meant her son's name was wrong. The tickets had to be refunded and bought again at a higher price, reports *Shane Hickey*

It was a week before a family holiday in Lanzarote that Raluca Hamilton realised there was an error on her two-year-old son's ticket for the flight: instead of his first name, it was her own that had been entered.

But what she thought was a simple error ended up costing her more than £730 to fix, and left her feeling like a "cash cow" for British Airways.

She believes the mistake happened when the autofill feature on her laptop filled in her name instead of her son's. When she contacted the airline to try to correct it, she found the only way to remedy the situation was to have the tickets refunded, and then for her to buy them again, but at a higher price.

Hamilton, who lives in London, later found that the same problem had happened with another flight booking, this time involving a trip to Crete, and again she was forced to get a refund and book again.

The minor changes to the two flights added £731 to her bill for the two holidays. She has criticised the airline for its inflexibility in charging her for what she says was a small mistake.

"I have flown for decades – on my own, with my husband, with my children and as part of wider groups. Getting a name wrong on a booking has never happened," she says.

"Despite being a loyal customer of BA for years, this is clearly not enough, and hundreds of pounds more were charged for the coffers of BA in the name of a policy which is, at best, obscure and, at worst, a cash cow for BA's benefit."

Last November, Hamilton booked flights for herself, her husband, her mother and her two young children for a holiday in Lanzarote at the end of March. When she went to select her seats a week before departure, she discovered that her son's ticket was for "Mstr Raluca Hamilton" instead of "Mstr Adrian Hamilton".

The airline told her it could not change the first name, but that she could get a refund for the ticket and then buy the seat again at that day's price. "During that customer services call, I effectively gave them back a ticket for £463.87 and they sold it back to me for £969.07 – plus £19 for a seat," she says.

After the call, she found the same problem had happened on the second booking: a holiday to Crete at the end of last month. To correct this ticket, she was refunded £790.08 and then charged £996.99 for the new one.

Hamilton asked customer services whether having to buy the ticket again was the only solution, as she was just changing the first name. She says she was told that the airline could change three letters, but not six.

> *'If my son was Max or Rex this update could be done for free. As he is Adrian, they couldn't'*
> **Raluca Hamilton**

"My understanding was that if my son had been called Max or Rex or Kay, then this update could be done for free but, since he is called Adrian, they couldn't go ahead."

The only explanation for the problem that she can think of is that the computer's autofill function put the wrong name in.

She says: "Why are there no inbuilt checks at BA to raise red flags and prevent customers from finalising their booking when the same name is listed twice, which is very clearly a human error?"

British Airways says the airline has a "24-hour cooling-off period" after the flight is booked when passengers can make changes or correct mistakes, such as the wrong route or an incorrect name. After that, "minor changes" are allowed, such as changing a name from Sean to Shaun or Lindsay to Lynsey.

"It is the customer's responsibility to ensure they book a ticket in the correct name," it says. It did not respond to suggestions of unfairness, or whether there are any internal checks to highlight such problems.

Hamilton's mistake is a cautionary tale for travellers to check their details after booking. Other airlines have similar policies, while some are more lenient.

EasyJet has a similar 24-hour cooling-off period during which passengers can make changes without any fee. After that, they have to pay £55 to change a single name (£60 if it is done through customer services) for each flight, as well as, like BA, the difference in fare. Spelling mistakes are free to amend, it says, and it uses discretion on how many characters can be changed.

Ryanair charges £115 for name changes online up to one day before departure, and £160 if it is done through a customer service agent up to two hours before flying. Up to three characters per name can be changed for free once.

Virgin Atlantic says passengers who make a mistake similar to Hamilton's can change the name for free without any time limit.

"We would accept name amendments for obvious errors, such as spelling mistakes or customers accidentally booking under their maiden/married name which isn't on their passport. This would be free of charge," it says.

Coby Benson, a solicitor at the law firm Bott and Co, says the problem of accidentally putting down the wrong name is frustrating and happens frequently.

"We understand BA's stance – if passengers could readily change names, then companies could book flights at the cheapest prices with a holding name like 'John Doe' and then sell those flights to somebody else for a profit," he says.

"It's a cautionary tale in checking and double-checking both before finalising the booking, and then immediately after."

# Your problems

Anna Tims
*Consumer champion of the year*



## BT left my blind father without his panic button

**My 101-year-old father was left without a landline and a functioning panic button after BT switched his phone service from analogue to digital without warning us. BT had informed us that the contract was about to finish, and asked me to contact them about renewing.**

**I duly called and was, at no time, advised to contact the panic button provider, or told of the possible need for adaptors to connect analogue phones to the new service. After four hours on the phone to BT when the service failed, I was informed that digital adaptors were required to ensure our phones worked.**

**Four days later, these had still not arrived and BT said it was unable to expedite the delivery. My father, who is registered blind and has only 30% hearing, was without his panic button for five days until the care line team attended and got it working.**
***TB, Birmingham***

Your father's predicament shows the human cost of the transfer of analogue telephone lines to an internet-based service.

Since September, customers who start, or renew, contracts have been switched to Digital Voice, which requires a broadband router.

However, the new technology poses a threat to vulnerable users since digital landlines do not function during power cuts and some fall buttons are incompatible.

Campaigners have criticised the speed of the rollout, which was originally planned to be completed at the end of next year. The government has twice required providers to delay the deadline after reports of "serious incidents" involving failed panic buttons.

BT recently signed up to a charter pledging, among other things, not to migrate panic button users unless their device is compatible with digital landlines, and to provide battery back-up solutions in case there is a power cut.

It seems these commitments were ignored when your father's service was switched over, and the consequences for him could have been catastrophic. As it was, you had to spend the five days at his side in case of an emergency.

The landline was restored after contact from the *Observer* and your father, who was not on BT's priority repair scheme, has been marked as vulnerable.

BT says: "We're very sorry the customer's experience fell below the usual high standard we strive to provide our customers. We have agreed a goodwill gesture to acknowledge his experience."

## Game over after Axa raises price by 70%

**I have been a customer with Axa home insurance for nearly 10 years and have never made a claim. Every year, when the policy comes up for renewal, Axa plays a game with me: it sends a renewal invitation with a substantially increased price of about 20%. I then call in and we agree a sensible price in line with inflation.**

**This year, however, it seems to want to play hard ball: the renewal quote is a staggering 70% higher, and, when I called, it said the best offer would be an increase of 53%.**

**It argues this is to do with inflation (though according to the ONS sectors with the highest rates of inflation, apart from alcohol and tobacco, didn't show more than 6%).**

**I don't want to spend time shopping around every year. I just want hassle-free insurance at a reasonable price. I have raised a complaint with Axa, but its turnaround is 30 days, after the policy renews.**
***CB, London***

Loyalty does not pay, as any insurance customer will attest. Companies fund eye-catching deals to tempt new custom with eye-watering price increases for those already reeled in.

This year every household is in for a nasty shock as premiums have soared above inflation across the board. But your rise is in a league of its own. According to Comparethemarket, home insurance premiums were 31% higher in the first three months of this year compared with the same period in 2023. In London the average rise is 36% with extreme weather, rising crime and increased repair costs cited.

Axa tells me that supply chain disruption and skills shortages are also to blame. "We consider a huge range of factors to assess specific risks," it says. "Even if there have been no changes or claims from the policyholder, we may consider certain risks to be higher than previous years and rate them accordingly."

It claims it absorbs extra costs as much as possible and prioritises the "evolving needs" of customers who are strapped for cash. The clue is in its parting remark that renewal notices are sent 21-25 days in advance to allow customers to obtain quotes from rival providers. Axa, it seems, no longer values your custom. I'm afraid, unless you feel the relationship is priceless, you are going to have to seek a better quote.

*Email your.problems@observer.co.uk. Include an address and phone number. Submission and publication are subject to our terms and conditions*

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# Weather

*Your forecast for the week ahead*

## UK and Ireland Noon today

## Two-day forecast

Low 8 High 14 **Tomorrow**

Low 7 High 14 **Tuesday**

A trough in the jet stream and a northerly wind across Britain will bring showers and a cool-feeling day on Monday.

## Europe today

Cold front

Warm front

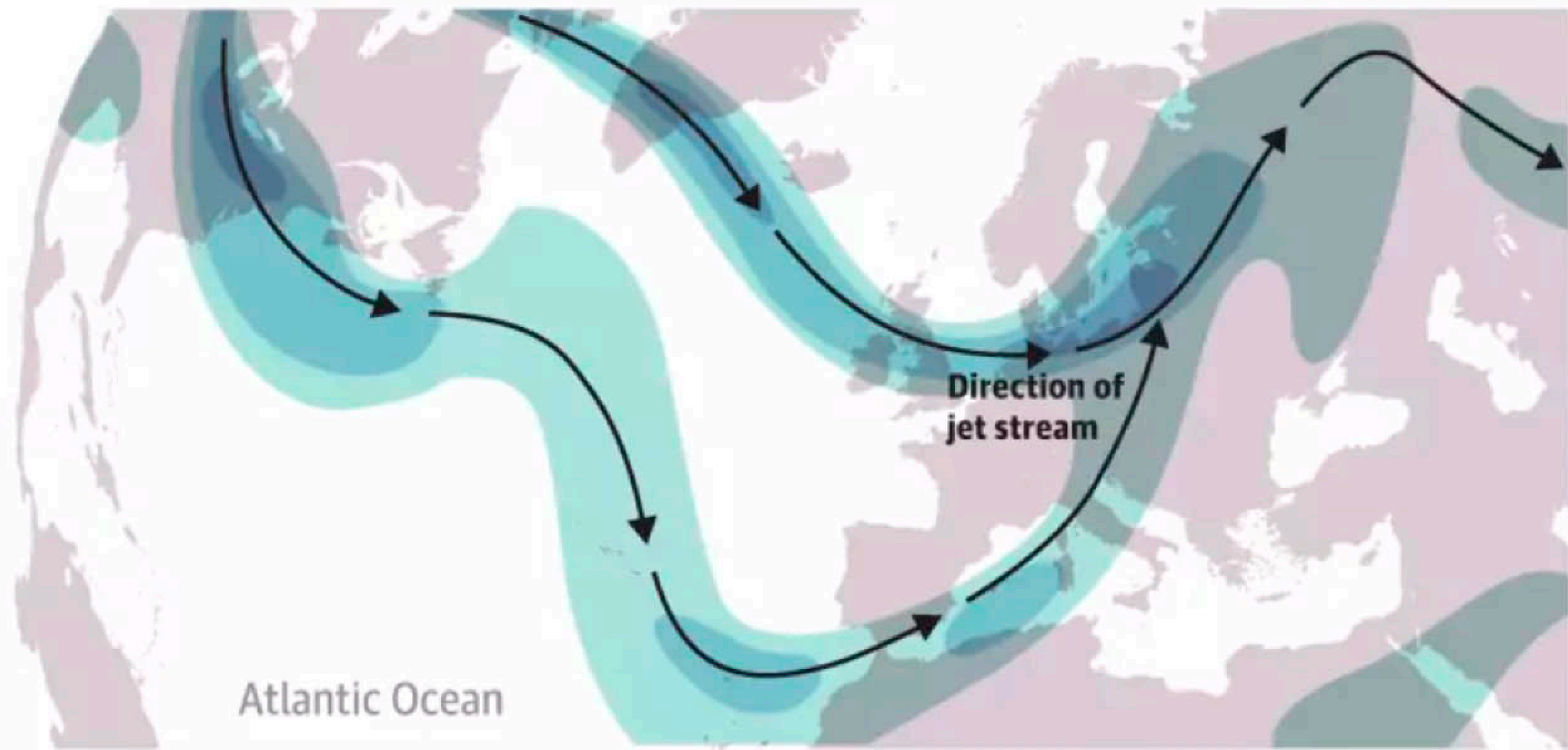
Occluded front

Trough

A fast-moving area of low pressure crossing the United Kingdom today will bring an increase in cloud and showers, though southern England can escape with a largely dry day. Low pressure located across Scandinavia will bring areas of rain. A front extending from this low will produce areas of rain and thunderstorms from the Baltic States and Ukraine to southern France and northern Italy. Thunderstorms across portions of Spain and Portugal can bring locally heavy rain.

## Jet stream

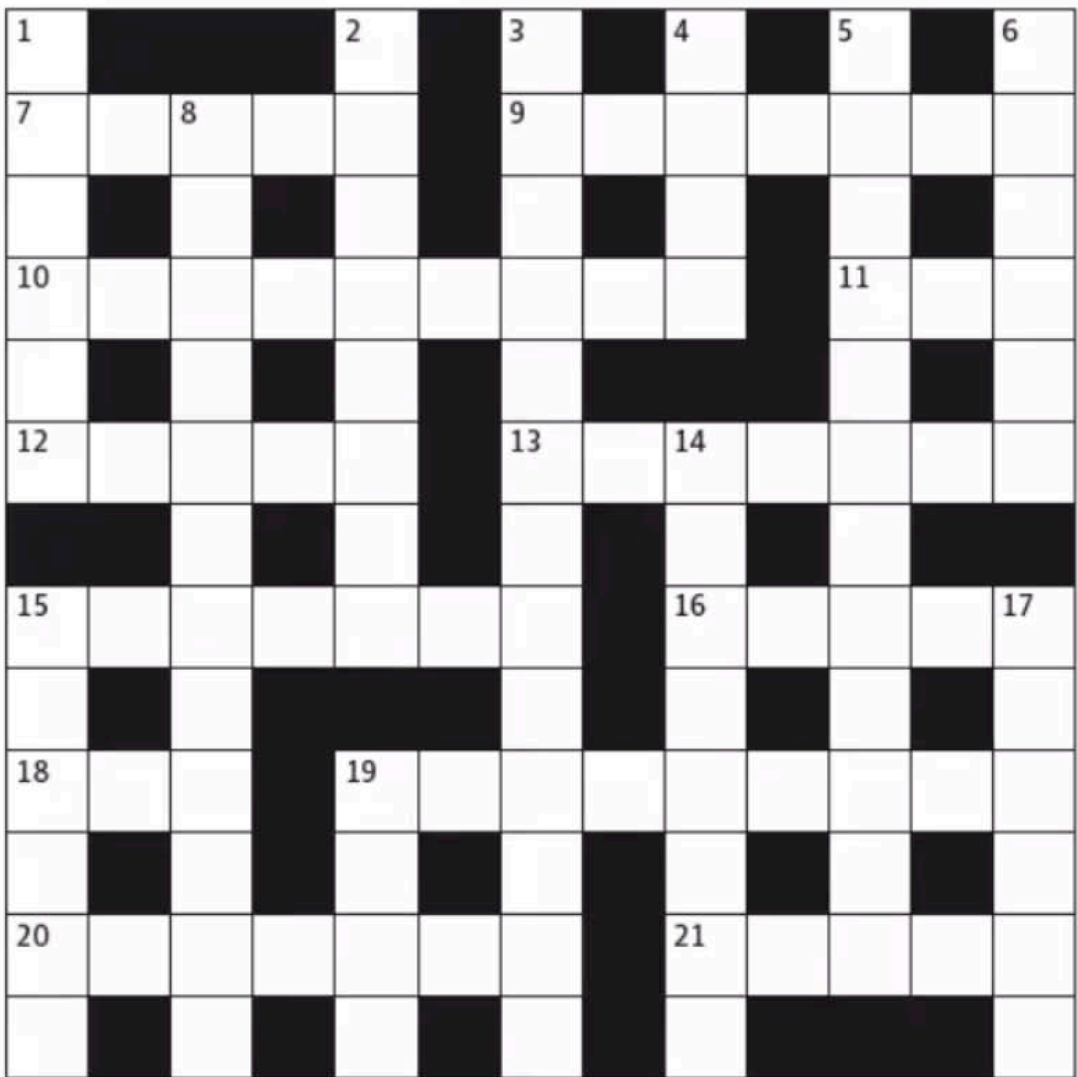
The jet stream sinking to the south across the United Kingdom will lead to an increase in cloud and showers today.




## Around the world

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Algiers | 29 | Corfu | 32 | Lagos | 30 | Perth | 20 |
| Ams'dam | 16 | Dakar | 28 | Lima | 19 | Prague | 21 |
| Athens | 32 | Dhaka | 35 | Lisbon | 22 | Reykjavik | 12 |
| Auckland | 17 | Dublin | 13 | Madrid | 25 | Rio de J | 26 |
| B Aires | 23 | Florence | 30 | Malaga | 29 | Rome | 28 |
| Bangkok | 33 | Gibraltar | 25 | Melb'rne | 15 | Singapore | 31 |
| Barcelona | 24 | H Kong | 31 | Mexico C | 28 | Stockh'm | 13 |
| Basra | 47 | Harare | 18 | Miami | 32 | Sydney | 19 |
| Beijing | 35 | Helsinki | 15 | Milan | 27 | Tel Aviv | 29 |
| Berlin | 21 | Istanbul | 30 | Mombasa | 31 | Tenerife | 26 |
| Bermuda | 27 | Jo'burg | 15 | Moscow | 22 | Tokyo | 26 |
| Brussels | 17 | K Lumpur | 32 | Mumbai | 30 | Toronto | 20 |
| Budapest | 27 | K'mandu | 33 | N Orleans | 33 | Vancouv'r | 20 |
| C'hagen | 15 | Kabul | 28 | Nairobi | 22 | Warsaw | 22 |
| Cairo | 36 | Kingston | 32 | New Delhi | 42 | Wash'ton | 29 |
| Cape Town | 19 | Kolkata | 38 | New York | 25 | Well'ton | 16 |
| Chicago | 25 | L Angeles | 23 | Paris | 21 | Zurich | 20 |

## Speedy crossword No. 1,496



### Across

7 Molten rock (5)
9 Sympathetic relationship (7)
10 The purging of emotions (9)
11 Field (3)
12 Unstressed vowel sound (5)
13 Set of three (7)
15 Untreated leather (7)
16 From an ancient Greek region – kind of bond in chemistry (5)
18 Triumphed – Asian currency (3)
19 Filled puff pastry case (3-2-4)
20 Rowdy (7)
21 Discernment (5)

### Down

1 Hits hard (6)
2 City on Kyushu (8)
3 Shake hands with voters (5,3,5)
4 Musical work (4)
5 Eponymous Daniel Defoe protagonist (4,8)
6 Royal house of Scotland and Britain (6)
8 Become afraid (3,3,4,2)
14 Wickedness (8)
15 Recompense (6)
17 Sailing vessel – knife, maybe (6)
19 Early stringed instrument (4)

**Solution** No. 1,495

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | Y | P | A | S | S | | F | I | L | L | I | P |
| E | | E | | H | | | | N | | O | | F |
| E | R | R | O | R | | L | E | H | A | V | R | E |
| F | | T | | U | | E | | E | | E | | N |
| Y | O | U | N | G | S | T | E | R | | R | A | N |
| | | R | | | | H | | I | | | | I |
| S | A | B | R | E | R | A | T | T | L | I | N | G |
| T | | | | X | | R | | | | D | | |
| E | L | F | | P | I | G | G | Y | B | A | C | K |
| P | | E | | U | | I | | A | | H | | O |
| S | A | T | A | N | I | C | | H | O | O | H | A |
| O | | I | | G | | | | O | | A | | L |
| N | U | D | G | E | D | | B | O | S | N | I | A |

**NOTES**
















OYSTER PERPETUAL DATEJUST 41

# ON THIS CLAY

**"Victory belongs to the most obstinate."** A pioneer of the air, Roland Garros* made this saying his personal motto. Over a century later, it still resonates in the stadium that bears his name. For here, on this clay, only the ones who can tame the surface, slide after slide, point after point, trace after trace, can hope to leave an indelible mark. **Welcome to Roland-Garros.**

*First aviator to cross the Mediterranean Sea, north to south non-stop (1913).

***#Perpetual***




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26 MAY TO 9 JUNE 2024

ROLEX



Euro 2024

Special preview





'England can't rely on Bellingham alone' – Southgate

Page 6



Shaw blames himself and United for injury saga

Page 7

The Observer Sport

09.06.24

# Saints' day

## Late Mitchell try seals Northampton's title as 25-21 victory thwarts defiant Bath after Obano sees red

Premiership final, pages 2-3

Fin Smith, who kept Saints in the hunt, savours their triumph at Twickenham

DAVID ROGERS/ GETTY IMAGES

**Australia masterclass** England still winless in World Cup after humbling 36-run defeat Page 5

**For Rob** Wigan make history as rugby league unites to celebrate the life of Burrow Page 16

# Mitchell's late heroics ends Saints' decade wait for Premiership glory

Bath rally heroically after Obano is sent off with almost an hour left to play but Northampton underline why they are team of season by closing out the final in grand style

| 25 | 21 |
|---|---|
| NORTHAMPTON | BATH |



**Robert Kitson**
*Twickenham*

Northampton have waited a long time for a momentous day like this. Their last Premiership title was secured in 2014 and they desperately wanted to send off their departing club legend Courtney Lawes in style. Mixed in with the post-match euphoria, though, was a sizeable dollop of relief that one of the all-time great Twickenham escape acts had narrowly failed to materialise.

The record books will show that a 73rd-minute try from their England scrum-half Alex Mitchell propelled Saints to the promised land but in many ways it was Bath's performance that defined the final. Playing with 14 men for more than an hour they were still hammering away at Northampton's defence in the closing moments and came close to nicking a truly remarkable result.

Northampton, who are also bidding farewell to Lewis Ludlam and Alex Waller, finished top of the regular season table but on this particular afternoon they occasionally lacked composure and came close to throwing everything away. They made far too many handling errors, were put under pressure at the set pieces and struggled to make their numerical advantage pay until the lively replacement George Hendy surged clear to send the supporting Mitchell over.

It all made for an emotional rollercoaster of a contest, even before the 22nd-minute red card shown to Bath's loosehead prop, Beno Obano, for a dangerous tackle. Against all the odds, Bath managed to claw their way back and took the lead with 13 minutes left through a Finn Russell penalty, the Scotland fly-half's third of the contest. It was not quite enough but Bath could be proud of the defiance and spirit that kept them in the contest until the end.

Once again, though, there could be no avoiding the impact of a match-shaping red card. There have been plenty of worse hits this season than Obano's heavy contact with a descending Juarno Augustus but none at a more delicate moment. As so often, while justifiable under the current framework, it was also not an entirely clear as day decision.

Obano's right arm was trying to bind, his knees were bent for contact and there was at least one angle that seemed to suggest the primary contact might have been to Augustus's shoulder. From his vantage point, though, the referee, Christophe Ridley, in his first Premiership final, could see only contact with the Saints No 8's chin and felt red was the only appropriate card colour.

Given the decision, it was also reasonable to ask why Augustus was not removed for a head injury assessment if the blow was so clear and obvious. What was not in any doubt was the steepness of the mountain Bath were left to climb. As well as losing Obano they had to sacrifice their own barnstorming No 8 Alfie Barbeary in order to bring on a reserve prop and a previously tight game instantly took on a different complexion.

Initially, Saints were quick to take advantage. Lawes ploughed into contact in the middle of the field but not before he had sent George Furbank roaring through a gap from which the full-back put Tommy Freeman clear to score. Less than three minutes later Northampton had a second score on the board, Furbank again influential in the buildup



*Northampton players wear ski goggles as they celebrate their victory in the dressing room*
DAVE ROGERS/GETTY IMAGES

*Alex Mitchell fights off the Bath defence to touch down Northampton's winning try at Twickenham*

DAVID ROGERS/GETTY IMAGES

before releasing Ollie Sleightholme on the left wing. The latter's right-foot banana kick loomed as though it might roll too long but held up just long enough for the winger to get there and touch it down.

Suddenly it was 15-3 with not even half an hour gone. To their credit, though, Bath kept coming and Thomas du Toit, their South African tighthead, maintained his reputation as a close-range try sniffer with another successful lunge. Russell slotted the conversion to reduce the half-time margin to five points.

When the fly-half added another three points shortly after the restart Bath were back within a couple of points and Northampton were duly relieved when Fin Smith responded with a penalty. The Saints do some things extremely well but a little attacking knock-on here and a scrum free-kick there were helping to keep their opponents in the game.

They also had Ben Spencer's left boot, one of this season's more valuable weapons. With advantage being played the scrum-half hoisted a high cross-field kick towards the left corner where a back-pedalling Hendy could not gather and allowed Will Muir to pounce hungrily on the loose ball. Russell pulled his conversion narrowly wide but it was now 18-18 and, in theory, anyone's game.

Cue Russell. When Furbank, for once, could not quite hold on to the ball the turnover allowed the No 10 the opportunity to conjure a 50-22 and put Saints under more pressure. When Curtis Langdon subsequently dropped another ball in his own 22, it was obvious to all that Saints were getting twitchy. When they were again pinged on the floor in front of their own posts Russell put Bath ahead. When Mitchell plunged over it was not a moment too soon for the frayed nerves of Saints' supporters.

It all made for a gripping end to another cracking occasion, with a delighted Lawes showing up to the post-match press conference shirtless and sporting a pair of ski goggles.

This was another of those days that underlined how marketable club rugby can be and the season as a whole has also been an encouraging one for those who believe there is an increasing amount of upwardly mobile homegrown talent in England. Some financial clouds remain but, on the field, this campaign has contained significantly more highs than lows.

| Northampton | Bath |
|---|---|
| Furbank; Freeman, Odendaal (Hendy 45), Dingwall, Sleightholme; Smith (James 70), Mitchell; Waller (Iyogun 53), Langdon (Matavesi 57), Davison (Millar Mills 53), Moon (Mayanavanua 70), Coles, Lawes (capt), Pearson (Ludlam 62), Augustus (Graham 67) **Tries** Freeman, Sleightholme, Mitchell **Cons** Smith, Furbank **Pen** Smith **Drop goal** Smith | Gallagher; Cokanasiga (Reid 78), Lawrence, Redpath, Muir; Russell (Bailey 79), Spencer (capt); Obano, Dunn (Annett 53), Du Toit, Roux (Stooke 69), Ewels, Hill, (Bayliss 69), Underhill (Reid 65-75), Barbeary (Schoeman 22; Stuart 53) **Sent off** Obano (22) **Tries** Du Toit, Muir **Con** Russell **Pens** Russell 3 |

**Referee** Christophe Ridley **Attendance** 81,699

# Obano red ruins another final in futile attempt to improve safety

**Michael Aylwin**
*Twickenham*



A season like this deserved the perfect finale. The return of these two giants of the English game to the grand final deserved one too. Instead, we had another final this season and we had another asterisk by the result.

Three big finals; three red cards. Happily – luckily – the one in the Champions Cup final came in extra time with the initiative already seized by the team disadvantaged. Richie Arnold's red card, slightly different from the other two in that the player, notionally at least, had a bit of time to weigh up his decision-making, did not cost Toulouse particularly dear, or the spectacle, which had been exhilarating.

But the other two … Sam Cane's red card in the first half of the World Cup final still echoes as a hollowing-out of the game's ultimate showcase. And now this, another red card, midway through the first half for Beno Obano for an incident measured in inches and milliseconds, leaves us wondering, fairly or not, whether the right club won.

Northampton suffer almost as much as Bath in the reckoning. No one can possibly grumble about a side who have so lit up this season emerging victorious. They have led throughout and delighted us with the inventiveness of their play. But finals are finals, important not only as showcases whose integrity must be preserved for the sport's credibility, but also as tests of nerves for would-be champions on the highest stage.

We will not know how a straight fight between these two would have unfolded. Certainly, it cannot be said Bath would have won the match had they not played an hour with 14 players, given how close the match ended up. Red cards change the dynamic of matches and, as so often, the disadvantaged side seemed to be galvanised by it, while the other team seemed thrown.

The fact we have to have this conversation is a blight on the game. To consider the incident itself, it was a classic of its kind. Obano was not quite as bent at the waist as it is physically possible for a player to be, but why pick on him? Upright tacklers are everywhere in rugby. But he was bent at the waist. More poignantly, as so often, the ball-carrier, Juarno Augustus, clearly dips at the last split-second. And so a legal tackle becomes illegal by an inch.

World Rugby presented a seminar to the media this season when they almost apologetically pointed out how rare red cards are for illegal tackles, as if to say: "Guys, we know these reds are not ideal, but, hey, most games are unaffected."

The pre-eminent referee of our time, Wayne Barnes, now retired, felt able to question the wisdom of sending players off who had, at worst, got their timing wrong.

It is difficult to remember any red cards in the modern era for acts that were deliberate. There was one here, which springs to mind, for a stamp in an England-Argentina game in 2017. Another was the last red card in a Premiership final. Even there, though, there was sympathy for Dylan Hartley in 2013 when he lost his cool under exceptional circumstances and may or may not have called Barnes a "fucking cheat".

But deliberate offences designed to cause harm, either physically or reputationally, are what the ultimate sanction is supposed to be reserved for – in any sport. When they are routinely issued for what are essentially accidents, or at worst failures of technique, they lose all meaning. They simply become inevitable parts of the sport.

Worse still, they will have no effect on the great crisis facing the sport. The idea that waving red cards will magically eliminate head collisions is clearly fallacious, given we are more than seven years in since the directive became official and the cards keep coming.

Even if they did eliminate them, to imagine the game's CTE crisis boils down to the odd smack of the head betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the dynamic. Instead, science continues to firm up the hypothesis that it is the repetition of many, many collisions of any kind, over years and decades, that is the key input.

In that same seminar, World Rugby revealed that the typical number of head acceleration events in this year's Six Nations, as measured by the instrumented mouthguards they are now using to monitor the toll on players' brains, is about 1,000 a match. This final had nearly 300 tackles and countless other collisions as players pile in at ruck and maul.

These are the areas that need focus. Red cards have become accepted with a sigh, but they do not need to be. We should be talking about the game, the integrity of which should be preserved at all costs. Only then will we be sure to get the finals we deserve.



*Beno Obano's tackle on Juarno Augustus became illegal in a millisecond*

# 'I couldn't believe we had actually won it'

**Robert Kitson**

The France-bound Courtney Lawes says his Northampton side deserved to be crowned English champions but admitted they had ridden their luck against 14-man Bath before clinching their first Premiership title for a decade.

Lawes, who celebrated his final appearance for his hometown club by turning up bare-chested and wearing ski goggles to the post-match press conference, acknowledged Saints' performance had left much to be desired after hoisting the trophy aloft alongside Lewis Ludlam. "I'm actually still livid from the game," said Lawes, speaking to TNT Sports. "I don't think we could have played worse.

"To be honest, I couldn't believe we had actually won it because we tried so hard to lose it. At the end of the game, I was actually pretty pissed off. Sometimes it doesn't look pretty – and it certainly didn't today – but we won, and that's what matters. Seeing these lads grow up has been really special. I owe the club so much. I'm just really happy to have been able to deliver what the club deserves."

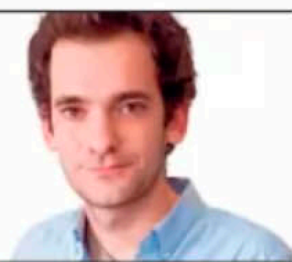
Lawes, who also confirmed afterwards he would like to be considered for next year's British & Irish Lions tour to Australia despite his impending move to Brive, suggested the first-half dismissal of Bath's Beno Obano had, in some ways, made life harder for Northampton because Bath had no option but to raise their game. "I've been on both ends of it," said Lawes. "Sometime when you receive a red card it actually galvanises you a bit. You've got nothing to lose and there's no pressure on you. All of a sudden all the pressure is piled on to the side with 15 and we really felt that today. We didn't fire on all cylinders and didn't get our game on to the pitch."

**'I'm still livid from the game. I don't think we could have played worse'**
**Courtney Lawes**

Bath's disappointed coach, Johann van Graan, called the Obano red card "part of the game" but suggested the margins involved under the current high-tackle framework were almost impossibly tight. "I don't believe that was foul play, I believe that's a collision between two powerful rugby players," he said. "[But] ultimately that was the referee's call and we'll stick by that. I'm not going to get into the whole debate, it's unfortunate."

# 'Like the Super Bowl on steroids': New York gears up for the hottest rivalry in cricket

**Andy Bull**
*New York*



## Tournament's success in the Big Apple depends on the blockbuster clash between India and Pakistan

There has not been a match between India and Pakistan yet that did not have plenty riding on it one way or another. The rivalry, which stretches over 59 Tests, 135 one-day internationals and 12 T20s in 75 years, is as intense as any in international sport. But this latest game between the teams is being played for strange and unfamiliar stakes.

Over this past week, it has become clear the success of the entire New York leg of the T20 World Cup is going to hinge on it and that the whole multimillion dollar project, which involved the construction of a 34,000-seat stadium, has been organised around this fixture.

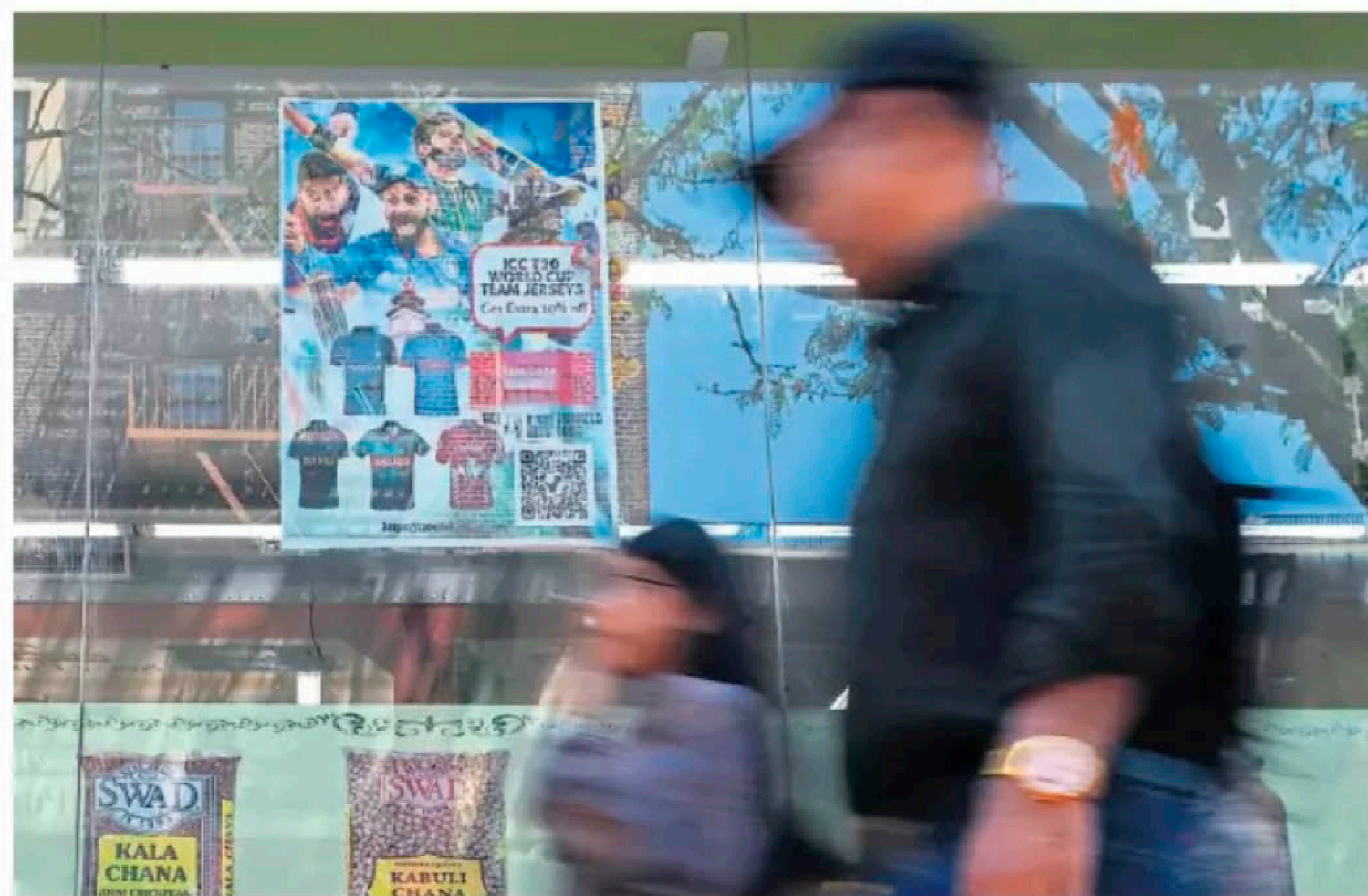
The Nassau County ground was not sold out for any of the first three group games. The combined attendance only just about equalled its capacity. The architects made the place so big that even the 20,000 spectators who turned out for India's win against Ireland seemed a little lost inside its vast scaffold grandstands.

Tickets for India v Pakistan, on the other hand, are long gone. The few that are available on resale start at $700 (£550) each – a snip next to the final hospitality spots, which cost $10,000. A lot of the corporate boxes, empty all week, are going to be used for this game before they are disassembled again.

Most locals do not even know the match is happening, but the few who do are not talking about much else. It seems everyone who is anyone in the Pakistani- and Indian-American communities is going to be there and everyone else wants to know how they can join them.

"Pretty much everyone I see asks me for a ticket," said the USA Cricket chairman, Venu Pisike. The USA's opening bowler Ali Khan sighed: "I've had to stop replying to the requests. I don't even mess with the tickets for that match, it's crazy."

Never mind the actual match, you cannot get into the viewing party being hosted by the New York Mets at Citi Field. They're expecting 27,000 along to watch the game on the big screen, while another 5,000 or so are due at a similar event a few miles from Eisenhower Park in Cedar Creek Park. That is before you start adding on all the people following the game in restaurants, bars and corner stores around the city.




*Although there were empty seats for India's victory against Ireland, the stadium will be full when they take on Pakistan*
PANKAJ NANGIA/ICC/GETTY IMAGES

*Team shirts are advertised in a New York supermarket, as excitement about the tournament ramps up*
ELZA GOFFAUX/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

> **'I've had to stop replying to requests for tickets for this match – it's crazy'**
> **Ali Khan, USA bowler**

The little town of Westbury has no idea what's about to hit it. "We don't know what to expect," said the county executive, Bruce Blakeman, "but we're told it's going to be like the Super Bowl on steroids."

A hundred extra police patrols have been laid on in the district and 300 local officers will be on duty at the ground, plus an undisclosed number of reinforcements from Suffolk County, the state police and FBI. They have got snipers on the nearby rooftops, SWAT teams on every gate, flatbed trucks blocking every route into the stadium and a team of 50 officers monitoring "every inch of the venue" on cameras from a remote location.

According to the police commissioner, Patrick Ryder, it is the biggest thing to happen in the county since President Obama passed through in 2012. "We consider this as the same level of threat as the presidential visit," he said. "But the operation itself is much bigger because that was only one person and this is over 30,000."

The ground is as ready as it is ever going to be. The pitches, grown in beds shipped over from Australia, have been pretty wild all week. Coaches and batsmen have been complaining about erratic bounce and three players were hit during India's match against Ireland. The groundstaff put in 24 hours of emergency work afterwards and if the batsmen still found it hard to time the ball during Ireland's second game against Canada on Friday, at least no one else had to retire hurt. The sides managed to make it past 100 runs too, something no other team had managed to do.

The ICC may be independent but it still has to answer to the Board of Control for Cricket in India and its broadcast partners, who generate 85% of the game's revenues. The prospect of this match being played on an unfit and even



India's Virat Kohli in the nets at the Nassau County ground before his country's match against Pakistan

ALEX DAVIDSON/ICC/GETTY IMAGES

dangerous pitch was making the administrators more nervous than the batters.

The teams themselves are well used to the hoopla around these games. The state of relations between the countries means India and Pakistan play each other only in international tournaments, but since the ICC always ensures they are paired together India and Pakistan have played each other 18 times in the past decade.

The players, who are the only people who understand how it feels to be in the middle of a match that regularly draws an audience of almost 500 million, have developed a kind of kinship with each other as a consequence. They tend to get on better than their politicians do.

India, who crushed Ireland by eight wickets here on Wednesday, are looking formidable. Pakistan, who lost in the tournament's first shock to the USA in a super over in Dallas on Thursday, are not. Whoever wins, the organisers will settle for a couple of good scores, a close finish, a handful of sixes and a clean getaway for the VIPs.



Australia celebrate after Josh Hazlewood (centre) dismisses Jonny Bairstow

GARETH COPLEY/GETTY IMAGES

# Buttler and England in reverse as Australia inflict damaging defeat

## Fast start from Head and Warner plus Zampa wickets leave holders on the brink

**Ali Martin**
*Kensington Oval*

It was supposed to be a game of relatively little consequence, the Ashes rivalry laid on for the sake of the broadcasters amid an expectation that England and Australia would sweep aside the associate teams in Group B. As the two seeds, they would swan into predetermined slots in the Super Eight stage.

But by following Tuesday's washout against Scotland with a heavy 36-run defeat to their oldest rivals in sweltering Bridgetown, Jos Buttler's defending champions have been plunged into a world of net run-rate calculations and weather forecasts when they meet Oman and Namibia in Antigua this week. Even dispensing with those two by heavy margins may not be enough.

Australia, already a victory over Oman to the good before this one, will be chuckling at the predicament that England now find themselves in. Making 201 for seven after being stuck in – the highest total of the tournament to date – Mitch Marsh and his side then slammed the brakes on England to restrict them to 165 for six. Pat Cummins, returning to the side, sent down a masterful two for 23 from four overs, while Adam Zampa spun his way to two for 28.

It was a classic shutdown against an England side that, beyond Buttler (42 from 28) and Phil Salt (37 from 23) up top, looked short on time in the middle. Jonny Bairstow had a particularly poor game, a shoddy outing in the field followed by scratching out seven from 13 balls. Having arrived at 92 for two in the 10th over – needing the same 109 in 10 England claimed they could have chased against Scotland – this was an opportunity missed. Although England were always behind in this one after David Warner (39 from 16) and Travis Head (34 from 18) ransacked 70 runs inside the first five overs. This lively start certainly underlined the difficulty of bowling from the Malcolm Marshall End, with a short off-side boundary – around 60 metres – and a strong cross-wind blowing into it.

Those conditions also made it all the more baffling that, after a tight first over from Moeen Ali, Buttler asked the far less experienced off-spinner, Will Jacks, to share the new ball and defend that trickier end. His more loopy fare was utterly manhandled for 22 runs with this figure then repeated when Buttler instantly swapped him out for the pace of Mark Wood and saw three more sixes soar.

Buttler claimed afterwards that Jacks was a call based on "gut feel" – not data – but it set the tone for a scrappy time in the field. The captain also spent so much time running from wicketkeeper to speak to his bowlers that he was penalised for slow play, Chris Jordan forced to bowl the 20th over with only three men outside the circle. Jofra Archer returning one for 28 from four overs felt a triumph in the circumstances.

But Australia's middle order had plenty of breathing room after that breakneck start, regular wickets scarcely proving to be setbacks as they crashed all but three of their 14 sixes with the wind. That said, Glenn Maxwell, who struggled for rhythm in a 25-ball 28, delivered one outrageous, deliberately sliced six into it. He always was a player to take things in a different direction.

Zampa is another and after Salt and Buttler threw some early counterpunches at the seamers, the leg-spinner's dual removal of both openers triggered the asphyxiation that followed. The first was a fine piece of bowling, Zampa firing in a quick, flat delivery first up to castle Salt. Buttler, slightly penned in, then perished attempting to reverse sweep him over backward point.

Thereafter only Moeen managed to truly swing freely as Cummins and Josh Hazlewood bowled smartly to the ground's dimensions. When the latter had Bairstow caught it was in effect over. England, desperate to change the tune after that bleak 50-over World Cup last winter, are once again in a bit of strife.

## Scoreboard

**Bridgetown** Australia beat England by 36 runs.

| Australia | | Balls | 4s | 6s |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TM Head** b Archer | **34** | 18 | 2 | 3 |
| **DA Warner** b MM Ali | **39** | 16 | 2 | 4 |
| ***MR Marsh** st Buttler b Livingstone | **35** | 25 | 2 | 2 |
| **GJ Maxwell** c Salt b Rashid | **28** | 25 | 3 | 1 |
| **MP Stoinis** c Brook b Jordan | **30** | 17 | 2 | 2 |
| **TH David** c Livingstone b Jordan | **11** | 8 | 0 | 1 |
| **†MS Wade** not out | **17** | 10 | 3 | 0 |
| **PJ Cummins** run out (Buttler) | **0** | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| **MA Starc** not out | **0** | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Extras** (lb1, w6) | **7** | | | |
| **Total** (for 7, 20 overs) | **201** | | | |

**Fall** 70, 74, 139, 141, 168, 200, 200.
**Did not bat** A Zampa, JR Hazlewood.
**Bowling** Ali 2-0-18-1; Jacks 1-0-22-0; Archer 4-0-28-1; Wood 3-0-32-0; Rashid 4-0-41-1; Jordan 4-0-44-2; Livingstone 2-0-15-1.

| England | | Balls | 4s | 6s |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PD Salt** b Zampa | **37** | 23 | 4 | 2 |
| ***†JC Buttler** c Cummins b Zampa | **42** | 28 | 5 | 2 |
| **WG Jacks** c Starc b Stoinis | **10** | 10 | 1 | 0 |
| **JM Bairstow** c Maxwell b Hazlewood | **7** | 13 | 0 | 0 |
| **MM Ali** c Warner b Cummins | **25** | 15 | 0 | 3 |
| **HC Brook** not out | **20** | 16 | 2 | 0 |
| **LS Livingstone** c Starc b Cummins | **15** | 12 | 0 | 1 |
| **CJ Jordan** not out | **1** | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| **Extras** (lb3, w5) | **8** | | | |
| **Total** (for 6, 20 overs) | **165** | | | |

**Fall** 73, 92, 96, 124, 128, 152.
**Did not bat** JC Archer, AU Rashid, MA Wood.
**Bowling** Starc 3-0-37-0; Hazlewood 4-0-28-1; Cummins 4-0-23-2; Stoinis 3-0-24-1; Zampa 4-0-28-2; Maxwell 2-0-22-0.
**Toss** England elected to field.
**Umpires** JS Wilson (WI) and NN Menon (Ind).




# Rooney in 2006, Bellingham now: Southgate wary of saviour syndrome

England manager knows relying on one gifted talisman would be a grave mistake in Germany, says *David Hytner*



The big man is back, or at least he is coming back. It is a situation we have lived before with England on the eve of a major tournament in Germany. For Wayne Rooney post-metatarsal at the 2006 World Cup, see Jude Bellingham, for different reasons, and Euro 2024.

It has been a draining week for Gareth Southgate, the dark clouds gathering as the manager prepared to make the final cuts to his squad, the anxiety unavoidable. It is football. But it is also people. The difficult decisions, especially the ones to omit Harry Maguire, Jack Grealish and James Maddison, the first of the trio for fitness reasons, were felt by everyone.

The idea was that the Wembley send-off against Iceland on Friday would represent a reset, but it went hard in the other direction. The result was bad, a surprise 1-0 defeat; the performance was worse. As Arsène Wenger used to say, the momentum builds slowly and can go quickly. Southgate was unhappy in the dressing room, making it clear that everything had to be better – particularly the mentality.

Perhaps the players were nervous about picking up an injury at the last; England kick off the finals against Serbia a week today. John Stones almost did, getting his foot trapped underneath the Iceland striker Jon Dagur Thorsteinsson as they went to ground in the first minute. Stones was able to continue, although he was withdrawn at half-time and left Wembley with a strapping on his right foot. Maybe there was worry in the back of minds. It was why the intensity was not there.

Southgate has fretted about a number of problems but after Iceland they seemed to be flushed into the public domain, the narrative taking in the search for someone to ride to the rescue. Which is where Bellingham – who was given additional leave after his involvement for Real Madrid in their Champions League final victory last Saturday – comes in.

It is not difficult to present him as a talisman, given the spectacular season he has had for Madrid; how Southgate has regeared his system from 4-3-3 to 4-2-3-1 to give him the No 10 role. To fall into the trap of needing an individual saviour would be a grave mistake.

"We are not putting everything on Jude," Southgate said. "We've got a lot of good players and it is a collective thing to go and try to win this tournament. If we are relying on one person that isn't going to be a team that wins. I'm sure he will give the squad a lift but it is not his responsibility to do that. It is for all of us to get the focus right, to make sure individually our mentality is right."

> 'Jude will give the squad a lift but if we are relying on one person that isn't going to be a team that wins'
> **Gareth Southgate**

Southgate was asked whether he had as many questions about his squad before a tournament. "There are uncertainties, physically," he said, mentioning that was why he had excluded Maguire and Jordan Henderson before that; getting straight to what is most bothering him.

A recap. Luke Shaw is the most obvious fitness concern; the hope is that the only specialist left-back will return to play some part in England's second group game against Denmark. Like Maguire, he suffered a serious setback in his injury rehabilitation in training at Manchester United.

Kieran Trippier and Marc Guéhi came back at the end of the Premier League season from long injury lay-offs and have had to be

# Diverse crowd comes together but more in hope than glory

**Paul MacInnes**
*Wembley*

The connection between Gareth Southgate's England team and the country it represents is rich but not without its complexities. It can often feel like people adore them and are frustrated by them in equal measure (and sometimes at the same time). Friday's match at Wembley provided a good opportunity to observe this dynamic in action as England lost to Iceland in their final fixture before travelling to Germany as the favourites for Euro 2024.

The first thing to be noted was the atmosphere as you stepped out of Wembley Park station and on to Olympic Way. At the top of the long bank of stairs and along the packed thoroughfare there were families everywhere pausing to capture the moment. Posing for photographs in stetsons with the St George's cross on them, Jack Grealish scarves around their shoulders and any number of vintage England shirts, this was a joyous, friendly atmosphere. It was something not so long ago you would have associated more with a concert than a football match.

This is a good thing. For those with memories going back, say, eight years (and that last defeat by Iceland), the idea that watching England could be something enjoyed by adults and children, boys and girls in crowds where ethnic diversity was rich and unremarkable, would seem far-fetched. Thanks to Southgate and his players (and Sarina Wiegman and hers, too) that has changed, one hopes permanently.

Expectations have changed too. This was not a crowd of daytrippers, even the children knew their football (I spoke to one young boy Archie who, in describing why Grealish may be a big miss for England explained thoughtfully why his transfer to Manchester City had allowed Pep Guardiola to transform his game into one of the most effective in the Premier League) but they all shared a common optimism and a belief that England ought to succeed.

Olly and Fergus, two twentysomething friends standing at the bottom of the Olympic Steps, said they were more hopeful than they were at Euro 2020, when England were in effect the home team. "We were just saying that after three tournaments Southgate has got his momentum and has built what he's set out to do," Fergus said.

"It's also a little bit scary as well because I feel like England always go into tournaments with a slightly lower expectation," said Olly. "Or maybe there's a big expectation, but you kind of doubt it at the same time. With this one, you think: "they have actually got this."

The noise in the ground was good, the atmosphere bright, and when England conceded awfully in the 12th minute it did not really shift a notch. But the biggest moments of engagement were for moments of skill (usually a flick) from Phil Foden or Cole Palmer. Given the ponderous nature of much of England's play, apparently unsure of how to use that abundant ability to unpick a massed Iceland defence, there were not many successful tricks to cheer. When half-time came there were boos.

The second half brought an armada of paper airplanes descending from the stands as supporters sought to entertain themselves (aircraft often constructed from leaflets advertising an antisocial behaviour hotline). It was only in the final 10 minutes that the crowd felt sufficiently engaged to get up on their feet in a mixture of hope and frustration, willing an England equaliser. That failed to materialise



●*Gareth Southgate has regeared his system to allow Jude Bellingham to play the No 10 role*

VISIONHAUS/ GETTY IMAGES/ REUTERS

managed carefully. Ditto Bukayo Saka and Anthony Gordon, who picked up knocks in the final week and returned against Iceland, the former as a substitute.

Harry Kane had a problem with his back and sat out Bayern Munich's final two Bundesliga matches. He saw action in both warm-up friendlies. Southgate has also had to watch the loads of Stones, Kyle Walker, Phil Foden and Kobbie Mainoo after giving them time off after the FA Cup final two weeks ago.




**England** will play their opening Euro 2024 Group C match against **Serbia** in Gelsenkirchen on Sunday before facing **Denmark** (20 June) and **Slovenia** (25 June).

Is Bellingham 100% fit? It is probably a silly question at this stage of the season. Footballers are rarely pain-free, especially now after the accumulation of so many games. But it is easy to linger on how Bellingham leant against one of the goalposts in the 70th minute of the Champions League final to stretch out his calf, possibly feeling some cramp.

On the night before the showpiece, he was pictured with a strapping on his shoulder; he had suffered a shoulder problem in November that ruled him out of a match for Madrid. Does the strapping indicate a problem? Bellingham was not at his best against Dortmund.

England's difficulties against Iceland took in how open and vulnerable they were; the physical balance in the lineup was not right. The question as to who plays with Declan Rice in midfield continues to pound. It was not Mainoo's night in the position while it was interesting to see Trent Alexander-Arnold introduced at right-back and not alongside Rice.

"Sometimes a performance like that can really sharpen the focus, sharpen the attention to the fundamentals of the game that have to be right," Southgate said. "Maybe in the last few weeks we've talked a little bit too much about what we want to be with the ball and if you are not bright without the ball, which we weren't, then you can have problems against any side.

"When you're one game away from a tournament there is a little bit of not wanting to get injured and slightly different focus. I've played in those games myself.

"In the games we had at Middlesbrough [before the previous Euros in 2021] we won [against Austria and Romania] but they weren't flowing performances with great intensity.

"I understand some of the reasons for it but equally it is a jolt at a good time for us because we'll have to get that preparation next week spot on. It means we'll have an edge to things, which we need."



●*England fans were in buoyant mood before the loss to Iceland at Wembley*

JAMES MARSH/ SHUTTERSTOCK

and the boos returned, this time louder and more widespread.

It did not feel like it on the night, but having a crowd that expects you to win and win well is a good sign. It shows at least that the team is capable of it. At the same time, such high expectations are difficult to reach and even trickier to maintain.

If this is the tournament where hopes exceed reality then it will surely be Southgate's last.

Whatever the outcome, however, the manager's legacy will be real. For some reason the transformation Southgate has wrought not just on the England's men's side but on its football culture seemed to be best encapsulated by Annabel, a young New Yorker living in London who had brought her American friends.

"The 2018 World Cup is when I really got into watching football and the England team is what got me into it," she said. "I identify with this team. They've a lot of young players who are my age and it's wild to watch them, how talented they are."

Annabel had caught the bug of the new England, but knew enough about the old to share her expectations for the Euros with a knowing laugh. "They can go all the way," she said, "but let's see."

# Shaw blames himself and United medical staff for injury woes

## Left-back admits he pushed himself too hard to make early return to fitness

**Jacob Steinberg**

Luke Shaw has offered an emotional insight into his season of injury woes, saying that he blames himself and Manchester United's medical department for the hamstring problems that have threatened the England left-back's place at Euro 2024.

Shaw, who is battling to be fit for England's second group game against Denmark on 20 June, has not played since going off against Luton on 18 February and was a major doubt to be included in Gareth Southgate's final 26-man squad for the tournament.

The 28-year-old has had to be mentally resilient and he has been hurt by accusations that he was focused more on being fit for his country than making himself available for United at the end of last season.

The reality, Shaw explained, was that he pushed himself too hard in a bid to be fit for the FA Cup final against Manchester City. A setback followed, deepening the defender's frustration and leaving him "devastated".

Shaw, who is the only left-back in England's squad, explained that mistakes were made when he went off with the initial injury at half-time against Aston Villa in February. It backfired when he was given the all clear by the medical department to start when United visited Luton in their next game.

"I felt something against Aston Villa and came off at half-time at Villa Park," Shaw said. "It's kind of everyone's fault. Partly my fault, partly medical staff, I think everyone would admit that. I didn't train the whole week. The scan came back and there wasn't too much there. But I didn't train all week, then trained the day before the game. If the manager asks me to play, I'm never going to say no. I shouldn't have played."

Shaw is likely to be key to England's hopes of glory in Germany. Southgate's back four is already shorn of Harry Maguire, who has not been included in the squad because of a calf injury, and concern around the team's chances deepened when they fell to a 1-0 defeat by Iceland in their final warm-up match on Friday.

It was not the ideal preparation for England, who face Serbia in their Group C opener on 16 June. Southgate has several fitness concerns and he is expected to ask the right-footed Kieran Trippier to fill in for Shaw, who is not back in full training yet.

The positive for Shaw is that he is making encouraging progress. Southgate described him as a "long shot" when he named his provisional 33-man training squad last month. "No one knows the situation, what's been happening," Shaw said.

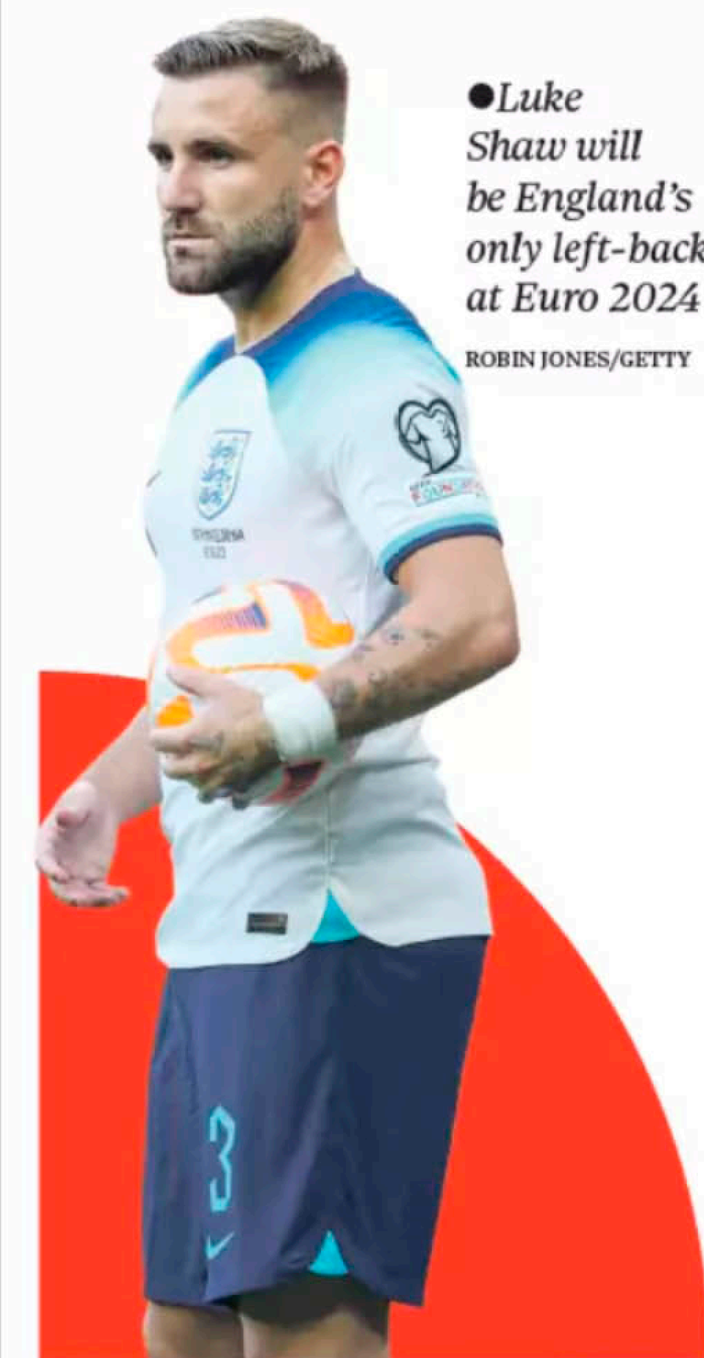
"I think people have seen that there was a setback, but I was actually very close to returning to team training. I was, of course, pushing to try and get back for the games and the final and I think I pushed too hard.

"I came back too quick and I actually ended up getting another injury in my hamstring, which was three weeks from the final and they said it was a six-week injury, so that's why there was that setback. I think people have been getting confused with what's actually happened because nothing had been said.

"I got a few people coming up to me, saying: 'How can you not be fit for United but fit for England?' But the circumstances were that I did push to do everything I can to be fit for United, and that's been really my whole season. It's been disappointing for me, but I want to do everything I can, first and foremost, for United.

"It's better for me to come out and say what happened, because I think there were a lot of questions over how I could be here and not United. That's been playing on my mind a little bit because I don't want people thinking that that's what I'm doing."

Shaw is optimistic about featuring at the tournament but he is not obsessing about England's first game. "That's not really down to me," he said. "I would love to make the first game, but I don't want to rush too quickly because realistically I've only got one chance. If I feel something, then that's it. I don't want that to happen."



●*Luke Shaw will be England's only left-back at Euro 2024*

ROBIN JONES/GETTY

# Robertson's leadership shows the way forward for Scotland

## Manager content despite draw in final warmup

**Ewan Murray**
*Glasgow*

The least welcome sight of Friday evening for Scotland supporters did not involve the two Finland goals that ensured Steve Clarke's team head to Euro 2024 with a draw rather than a victory in their final warm-up. As Andy Robertson quickly downed tablets on the touchline, fears increased that Clarke was facing another selection blow before Germany.

The manager later eased concern by explaining Robertson felt nauseous during half-time of the 2-2 draw. There appeared no broader concern. Robertson was withdrawn shortly after the hour mark, having created Lawrence Shankland's goal and fired the ball into the area that triggered Arttu Hoskonen to flick into his own net. Robertson remains one of Scotland's key attacking threats.

"The performance from Andy, he was always on the front foot," Clarke said. "That's 49 games as captain now and that's a record. You look at Andy and think: 'Come on, Andy, there are a few more to come.' He has been great for me. He came in and got the captaincy at a really young age but has really grown into the role. He's a proper leader."

The Liverpool defender is key to creating Scotland's culture. In the dressing room at Hampden Park, the veteran goalkeeper Craig Gordon was presented with a signed shirt to mark reaching 75 caps. This was a bittersweet moment for the 41-year-old, whose international career may be over after he was one of two players removed from the squad that will travel to Germanytoday. At the other end of the scale, Tommy Conway made his debut against Finland.

"Tommy got a strip signed with a number one on it. There was one with 50 on it for Grant Hanley and 75 for Craig," Clarke said. "These things come from the captain. It's his idea, it's his thoughts going into this saying: 'This is what we're about. Let's keep the group right and make sure we are always giving these little mementoes.'

"They get a silver medal for 25 caps and a gold medal for 50. I don't know what they get for 75 and it always takes about a month before they get those medals, so it's nice on the night to actually give something out."

Scotland seem relieved to be heading to the tournament. Eight months have passed since they qualified, with friendly performances in the meantime routinely posing more questions than answers. Clarke is confident his players will be all right on the night. Namely, when opening the tournament against the hosts on Friday before they take on Switzerland and Hungary, with the aim of reaching the knockout stages of a major tournament for the first time.

Clarke is adamant Scott McTominay, who has missed June's friendlies, will be available for selection. "The competitive edge will be back," Clarke said. "The desire to not lose. We will be full on, 100%.

"I'm not saying we went out against Finland to try and lose, but you go out and it's always in the back of your mind.

"What happened with Lyndon [Dykes, who broke down injured in training] spooked them a little bit. Now that they're there, they're in the competition, it's full steam ahead."

It would be a surprise if Che Adams does not spearhead the attack against Germany. Scotland's first opponents will head into their home event on the back of a victory after a last-gasp Pascal Gross effort completed a comeback against Greece in Mönchengladbach.

Still, Shankland's header on Friday will have given the 28-year-old Hearts striker fresh confidence. His third goal in 11 Scotland appearances came after the frustrating drawing of a blank against Gibraltar and, as a substitute, Northern Ireland.

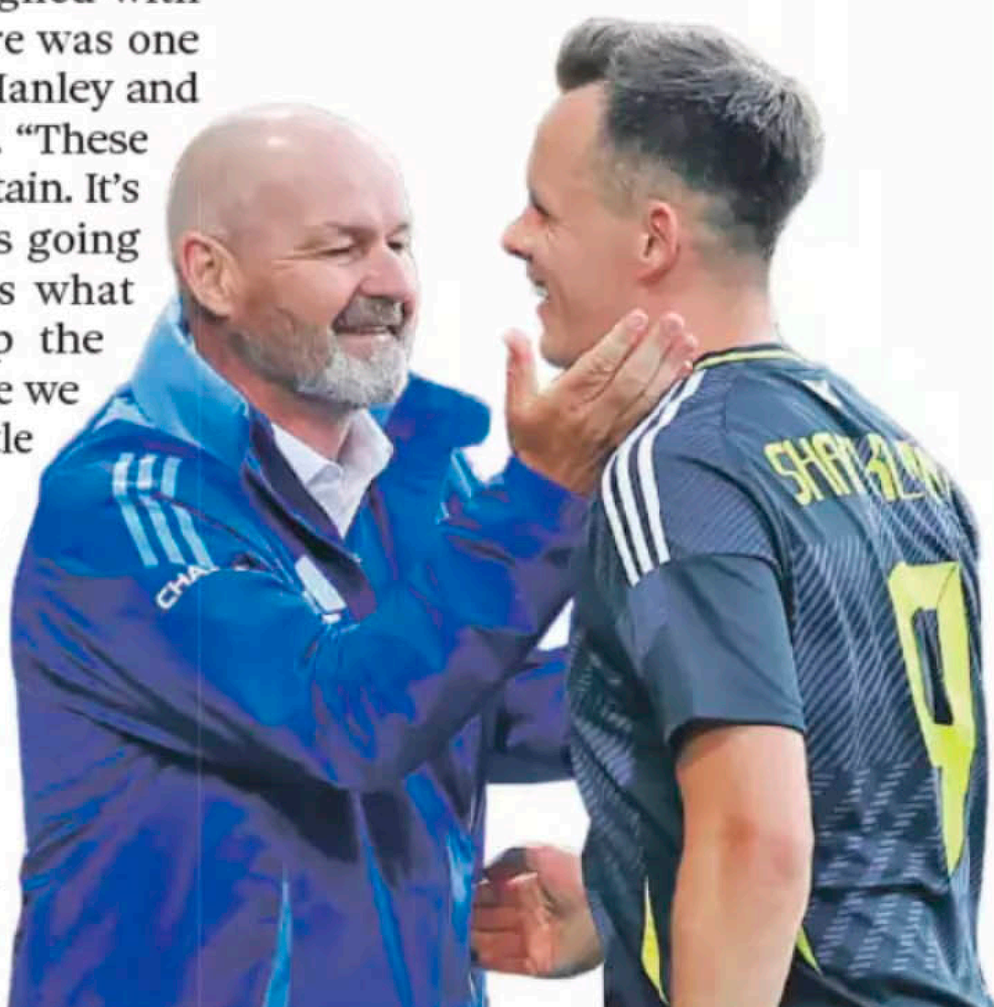
"It meant quite a lot to him. He gave me a big smile when he came off," said Clarke of Shankland (left). "It's important because strikers live on goals.

"Lawrence was a little bit frustrated after the Gibraltar game because any chances that fell didn't fall to him. But he kept getting in there and he eventually got his head on one."



Andy Robertson enjoys some down time at Blair Drummond Safari and Adventure Park in Stirling ROBERT PERRY/PA

> **'It meant quite a lot to him. He gave me a big smile when he came off'**
> **Steve Clarke**




### Scotland squad

**Goalkeepers** Zander Clark Hearts, Angus Gunn Norwich, Liam Kelly Motherwell

**Defenders** Liam Cooper Leeds, Grant Hanley Norwich, Jack Hendry Al-Ettifaq, Ross McCrorie Bristol City, Scott McKenna Copenhagen, Ryan Porteous Watford, Anthony Ralston Celtic, Andy Robertson Liverpool, Greg Taylor Celtic, Kieran Tierney Real Sociedad

**Midfielders** Stuart Armstrong Unattached, Ryan Christie Bournemouth, Billy Gilmour Brighton, Ryan Jack Unattached, Kenny McLean Norwich, John McGinn Aston Villa, Callum McGregor Celtic, Scott McTominay Manchester United

**Forwards** Che Adams Southampton, Tommy Conway Bristol City, James Forrest Celtic, Lewis Morgan New York Red Bulls, Lawrence Shankland Hearts

**Scotland's Group A fixtures**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Friday | Germany, Munich | 8pm |
| 19 June | Switzerland, Cologne | 8pm |
| 23 June | Hungary, Stuttgart | 8pm |

## Football in brief

### Warning for England as Serbs sink Swedes

Aleksandar Mitrovic was among the goals for Serbia as England's opening Group C opponents warmed up by beating Sweden 3-0 in a friendly in Stockholm. Sergej Milinkovic-Savic opened the scoring on 18 minutes. Mitrovic – who left Fulham for Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal last summer – added a second on the hour, and Dusan Tadic made it three with twenty minutes to go. Serbia face England next Sunday in Gelsenkirchen. England's other group opponents were also in action: Slovenia drawing 1-1 with Bulgaria and Denmark beating Norway 3-1, with goals from Pierre-Emile Højbjerg, Jannik Vestergaard and Yussuf Poulsen. Elsewhere, Pedri scored twice as Spain beat Northern Ireland 5-1. **Reuters**

### Martínez: Ronaldo still has what it takes

Roberto Martínez has played down concerns over Cristiano Ronaldo's readiness. Ronaldo, 39, has played his club football in Saudi Arabia since last year, but Portugal's coach said the forward still has a lot to offer. "Cristiano is very consistent at his club," said Martínez, speaking before yesterday's 2-1 friendly defeat to Croatia, during which Ronaldo was an unused substitute. "We have 23 players, so it will be competitive. But Cristiano will give everything he can give. There is no other player in the world who can bring what he can to the dressing room." Portugal, in Group F, begin their campaign against the Czech Republic, before taking on Turkey and Georgia. **Reuters**

### Page shrugs off boos as Wales 'go again'

Wales's manager, Rob Page, is determined to end the rising discontent as his side, who failed to qualify for Euro 2024, look to move on from last week's 0-0 draw with Gibraltar against Slovakia today. Page had to withstand boos and calls for him to quit after Gibraltar held a young Wales side. "We'll put it right and go again," said Page. "We wanted to expose some younger players to international football; we'll have others back for Slovakia." Today's friendly is Wales's final outing before the Nations League campaign begins in September. **PA Media**



●*Andriy Shevchenko is Ukraine's voice in the corridors of Uefa, Fifa and beyond*
ANASTASIA VLASOVA/ THE OBSERVER

*'I want to help my country and that is why I put myself forward ... my plan is to support and love Ukraine'*

# 'Our mentality, Ukraine's strong character: we're going to fight'

Andriy Shevchenko, president of Ukraine's FA, has been given the task of finding light in the darkness, he tells *Nick Ames*



●*Shevchenko scored twice in a famous victory over Sweden at the European Championship in 2012*

Andriy Shevchenko is thinking back to a summer of joy, promise and kinship that feels a lifetime away. It was 12 years ago that Ukraine co-hosted the European Championship and a continent could, in many cases for the first time, discover the nation's riches.

"That was a happy time for Ukraine," he says. "A country together, smiling people enjoying their love of football. That tournament united people a lot and we felt proud. We tried to show the best of ourselves so that visitors could come and enjoy a beautiful competition. The memory of that time is like a bright light."

In 2012, Shevchenko lit the flame with two goals against Sweden at Kyiv's Olympic stadium. Now, in a meeting room 400 metres away from the scene of those heroics, he is tasked with leading Ukrainian football back through darkness.

Five months ago, he was elected president of its football association and it is no small achievement that, on 17 June, he will be able to watch the national team begin their Euro 2024 campaign against Romania in Munich. Ukraine have had to improvise heavily through the constraints of wartime but they will arrive in Germany with a mission and a message.

"This is a very important point in time for us," he says. "It's vital our team, our federation, participates. We can talk about Ukraine and show the country is fighting while also trying to live. It's such a difficult moment and we have a duty in sport to do the maximum we can."

The same sense of duty pushed Shevchenko to run for his new position. His name and presence are enough to hold a room far beyond his homeland and he is canny enough to know that. He is Ukraine's voice in the corridors of Uefa, Fifa and beyond. These are places where Russia, even in exile from the international stage, continues to exert influence and Shevchenko's ambassadorial clout may be crucial in ensuring football's authorities hold their existing line.

"I want to help my country, I want to be here, and that is why I put myself forward," he says. "That is my plan: supporting and loving Ukraine for so many reasons. We have many friends and partners who back us, and we have to keep the pressure on every day."

For all his obvious cachet, he emphasises on several occasions that his role is more administrative than political. There is a huge job to do domestically: Ukraine's footballing raw materials are in little doubt and nor is its heritage, but cultivating the former while building on the latter feels an uphill struggle when the country is under constant attack.

"The main target when I started was qualifying for Germany and making sure the logistics were in place," he says. "Then there are the other points: organising league games, improving the financial situation, the fact a lot of talented young players have left the country because of the invasion and we need to connect with them again. That's one of the biggest challenges."



●*Mykhailo Mudryk's late winner against Iceland secured Ukraine's place at Euro 2024*
RAFAL OLEKSIEWICZ/ GETTY IMAGES

Ukraine beat Iceland in March to ensure their spot in Group E and given they could not play a single qualifier on home soil the feat was exceptional. But there is quiet hope that a sparkling side can achieve something special.

Shevchenko has faith in the team's manager, Serhiy Rebrov, with whom he formed a telepathic strike partnership for their country and an outstanding Dynamo Kyiv side. The return of the old one-two is an obvious romantic note in Ukraine's difficult story.

"We see football in the same way," he says. "We had talent, but that goes with education, hard work, focus and discipline. What I always like about Serhiy is his professionalism. His dedication to the job is outstanding.

"He took them in such a difficult situation, especially with England and Italy in the qualifiers, but we fought to the end and it worked. Not just through fighting, either, but by playing good football."

Shevchenko had a five-year spell in charge, taking Ukraine to the Euro 2020 quarter-finals before they were soundly beaten by England in Rome. "Modern football, attractive football, something people remember us for," was always his aim.

In Ukraine, he sees a country that has produced three Ballon d'Or winners – Oleh Blokhin, Ihor Belanov and himself – and whose two biggest clubs, Dynamo and Shakhtar Donetsk, have won major European honours.

"We haven't won a Champions League but our teams have always been tough to play against," he says. "Our mentality, our strong character: we're always going to fight and compete. This has been our identity for a long time and now it's coming out even more."

Given the present-day context, Shevchenko believes Ukraine is "in a very good shape football-wise". The under-19 and under-17 sides reached their European finals tournaments and the country will contest its first men's Olympic competition next month. The local league has, despite constant stoppages due to air raid warnings, completed a second season since Russia's full-scale invasion and crowds have begun to return under strictly monitored conditions.

Almost 3,500 fans were able to watch the Ukrainian cup final between Shakhtar Donetsk and Vorskla Poltava, held in Rivne, four weeks ago. That was impossible to imagine in February 2022. "We're facing incredible challenges but our football society feels very united now," he says. "There's a high determination to understand and solve our problems."

Shevchenko sees a chance for his sport to wield its power for good, just as it did when Europe's fans converged on his country. "It's important how you use this power," he says. "It's about whether you use it in the right way, to connect with people and send peace messages, or if you use football to cover war crimes or things like that.

"Football is a very powerful tool: we have to use it in the right way."

# Brilliant Oranje

# Fifty years on, the game is still in thrall to Total Football

Influence of the Netherlands at the 1974 World Cup finals – Johan Cruyff and the high-press revolution – will still resonate in Germany, says *Jonathan Wilson*



Sergio Markarián was the 30-year-old general manager of a fuel distribution company in Montevideo when he became aware of his mission. He had given up on his dreams of becoming a footballer 12 years earlier but, watching the 1974 World Cup, he realised his time in the game was not over.

As he watched the Netherlands outplay Uruguay, he knew that he had to become a coach so he could ensure his country would never suffer in the same way again. And it wasn't just Uruguay. The Dutch went on to beat Argentina and Brazil as well, by an aggregate score of 8-1. Markarián had to teach the whole of South America how to deal with Total Football.

Whether seven league titles in three South American countries and a third place at the Copa América constitutes success on those terms is debatable, but what matters more is that Markarián was prompted to make the effort. He was not the only one inspired by the Dutch, even if they did go on to lose 2-1 in the final to West Germany.

Arrigo Sacchi, a shoe salesman at the time, said he felt his television set wasn't big enough to appreciate what they were doing and, intoxicated by the potential, soon resolved to take the Netherlands' hard-pressing game to Serie A. Within 15 years he would have revolutionised the Italian game and won the first of his two European Cups with Milan.

Other international sides may have made a similar impression, but none had such a lasting influence on how the game was played as the Netherlands at the World Cup in 1974. In part, it was an issue of technology.

The 1970 World Cup was the first to be broadcast live globally, the Telstar satellite beaming Technicolour images of Pelé and Tostão, Gérson and Jairzinho, Carlos Alberto and Rivellino, into homes across the world. But many of the games were played too late at night for a European audience; in West Germany they kicked off in the afternoon and evening in Europe, or in the morning and afternoon in South America. Far more people watched live. And what they saw was a team that had taken pressing and the possibilities it offered to new heights.

But there was also a sense, that only became apparent in retrospect, that 1970 had not been the great herald of a new age of attacking football it had seemed at the time. Rather it was a throwback, the heat and the altitude of Mexico making the sort of high-intensity pressing that had dominated in 1966 impossible.

Even Brazil, those who could look beyond the straight-off-the-beach stereotypes realised, had prepared meticulously using a Nasa-approved training course while their manager, Mário Zagallo, spoke of the need to remain compact.

By 1974, amid the persistent rain of West Germany, pressing was back. But whereas it had seemed a fairly functional tool for England and the USSR, in the hands of the Dutch it produced football of extraordinary beauty.

Again, hindsight shows that 1974 was the high point of Total Football. Vic Buckingham had planted in Amsterdam the seeds he had carried from Peter McWilliam's Tottenham, and Rinus Michels had nurtured them from taking charge of Ajax in 1965.

The first indication football in Britain had that something special was happening in what had always been regarded as a backwater of the game came on an afternoon of thick mist in December 1966 when Ajax beat Liverpool 5-1.

Ajax had won the European Cup three times before the 1974 World Cup. Feyenoord had won it as well. But those were different times; the World Cup was the tournament that attracted by far the most viewers. It was there, far more than in the league or the European Cup, that legends were created.

**'Cruyff said to me the Dutch could not play Brazilians or Argentinians on a big pitch, they wanted to reduce the space'**

Exactly how much of what the Dutch were doing was understood by non-specialists is unclear. Most of the talk surrounded the interchange of positions and the attacking possibilities that opened up. But positional shifts actually tended only to be on the longitudinal axis. In what was essentially a 4-3-3, the right-back might swap with the right-sided midfielder or the right-winger but he would rarely step into the centre of the pitch.

Besides which, interchanging positions wasn't the revolutionary aspect. Plenty of teams, from Schalke to Uruguay, Independiente to Hungary, had done that before. What was truly revolutionary about Dutch football in the early 70s, what marked them out from, say, West Germany, was the aggression of its press, the use of the offside trap as an attacking ploy.

Brazil's captain at the 1974 World Cup was Marinho Peres. He played in Brazil's 2-0 loss to the Netherlands. When he then joined Michels and Johan Cruyff at Barcelona, he was baffled by the demand to push up. In Brazil, a high offside line was known as a "donkey line".

"What Cruyff said to me," Marinho said, "was that the Netherlands could not play Brazilians or Argentinians, who were very skilful, on a huge pitch. The Dutch players wanted to reduce the space and put everybody in a thin band. The whole logic of the offside trap comes from squeezing the game. This was a brand-new thing for me. In Brazil, people thought you could chip the ball over the line and somebody could run through and beat the offside trap, but it's not like that because you don't have time."



Fifty years on, that understanding now feels like a basic of the game. Almost any side with any aspiration to be elite presses – at least to an extent. Everybody knows that the timing is vital, that a team steps up as the opposition passes the ball, that the player receiving then has to be put under instant pressure to prevent him measuring a pass over the advancing line.

That is now so central to so many coaches' interpretations of football



●Johan Cruyff was a leading part of the Dutch side at the 1974 World Cup that proved revolutionary

STF/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

that it feels the game essentially falls into two parts: before and after systematised pressing, with the dividing line falling in the mid-60s.

It may be that it had to be the Dutch, a country without a strongly defined football culture to that point, without a predetermined way of doing things, who could embrace the future with such gusto. It probably helped that the football revolution in Amsterdam went hand in hand with broader societal change. Amsterdam transformed from Camus's gloomy city in which pipe smokers watched the same rain coming down on the same canals to become the centre of the youth revolution. But 1974 reified in the public mind the idea of what Dutch football should be.

There is a sense in recent years that the harking back to 1974 has become restrictive. Bert van Marwijk's aggressive side that lost in the World Cup final in 2010 was disowned by many of the canal-belt philosophers for not living up to the ideals of Total Football. Ronald Koeman, now back for his second spell as manager, and Louis van Gaal have committed the heresy of playing with three central defenders and wing-backs, diverging from the 4-3-3 orthodoxy.

But football is not a religion. Momentous as the summer of 1974 was for Dutch football, it was not a scripture. There are few absolutes. When the world plays your game, has adapted and refined it, the only way to get ahead again is to refine it better. That is Koeman's mission.

●Ronald Koeman is in his second spell in charge of the Netherlands and knows the history

HOLLANDSE HOOGTE/ SHUTTERSTOCK

**ON OTHER PAGES**

Germany recalls golden days: 'We could be in 2006 again'
Main section, pages 38–39



*A Manchester City fan holds up a mask of Erling Haaland as the club celebrate a sixth Premier League title triumph in seven seasons*

ADAM VAUGHAN/EPA

# Quiet before the storm as City's battle with Premier League begins

Hugely controversial arbitration case could have seismic repercussions for English football, writes *Paul MacInnes*

At an unspecified location in central London this week, the latest stage in the Premier League's civil war will begin to unfold. Expected to last two weeks, the arbitration case brought by Manchester City against the competition of which they are champions will be dry, its verdict technical. The consequences will probably be anything but.

City, who are owned by Sheikh Mansour, the vice-president and deputy prime minister of the United Arab Emirates, will argue in front of a panel of three independent lawyers that the Premier League is breaking the law of the UK. The infraction in question relates to rules around associated party transactions (APTs) and the need for clubs to make sure any deals they do with businesses who have "material influence over the club or an entity in the same group of companies as the club" are struck at fair market value. City argue this goes against competition law.

The case will be heard in private and there will be no public acknowledgment of any outcome. Thanks to reporting in the *Times*, we know something about the contents of City's legal submission and by all accounts it appears quite extraordinary. The action being brought against the Premier League board could almost be seen as a Trojan horse for a challenge to the entire structure of the competition.

According to reports, City are not only challenging the APT rules but seeking damages for deals that were affected or lost as a consequence. Those damages would have to be paid by the league, whose shareholders are its 20 member clubs.

City also allege the rules were designed to stymie owners from Gulf states and members of multi-club ownership groups – something that applies to City in both instances – and were only established due to the desire of rivals to "safeguard their own commercial advantages".

City argue the Premier League has a vested interest in limiting APTs as it is a rival for sponsorship income and if the rules are not changed they could be forced to limit spending on community projects and the women's team.

Finally, they argue any competitive restraint is underwritten by the Premier League's voting system. That no rule can be changed without 14 of its 20 clubs agreeing is, according to City, succumbing to the "tyranny of the majority".

This legal submission was made in February, after the Premier League had approved new, tighter rules around APTs (City's dissatisfaction with the rules pre-dates this amendment). In legal terms, it is not linked to the 115 charges brought against City over alleged financial wrongdoing, which the club strongly denies. In political terms, the calculation is very different.

What does it mean for the world's leading league when it is in recurring dispute with its champions of six of the previous seven seasons?

**City have the profile and the financial heft to make things very painful for the Premier League**

Although the rules remain in place at the very least it means uncertainty since they are being directly challenged, as well as uncertainty over the league's ability to regulate its own competition.

In this way, City's challenge is only punching an existing bruise. Last season, the rules, be they around VAR or PSR, were subject to consistent criticism and pressure. At the same time, the Premier League has spent time and resource trying to fend off the arrival of an independent regulator, insisting football can look after itself. As time goes by this argument seems more and more tendentious.

Some critics of the Premier League see the APT rules as a classic example of bad governance, put together hastily to deal with a short-term problem (a new focus on APTs began after Newcastle were bought by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund).

They point also to the league being forced to alter plans to introduce further financial rules, the so-called Top to Bottom Anchoring proposals (ironically, TBA for short), after they failed to properly consult with outside stakeholders that included the PFA, the player's union. The critics argue this is a trend and that City's actions are only making the government's case.

A more sympathetic reading, however, could find the Premier League's position to be invidious. It faces challenges from all sides, not just from domestic regulation and traditional competitors in other leagues and sports, but from the governing bodies, Uefa and Fifa, which are expanding their competitions in a way that not only makes them direct rivals for broadcasting money but puts pressure on the domestic calendar.

Its shareholder clubs, meanwhile, are split into ever-increasing factions; from those that form part of a multi-club ownership group, say, to those who have been acquired by investment funds with outlooks very different from those of the sovereign wealth funds.

City have the profile and financial heft to make things painful for the Premier League. Their recourse to legal action suggests a club intent on changing the order of things. And this is perhaps the biggest concern to emerge of late. One of the key factors behind the Premier League's success has been the centring of the collective, from the way the league is marketed ("anyone can beat anyone on a given day") to the way power and money is shared.

City's actions suggest the champions no longer subscribe to this way of thinking and wish to change it. It may seem unlikely, but it could be a shift that brings the whole house down.

# How I fell in love with football – and the Taliban weren't going to stop me



*Khalida Popal* – the founder of the Afghanistan women's team – overcame violence to build a fledgling network of girls' teams

*In 2003, the Taliban had been out of power in Afghanistan for two years, but their influence and ideology still ran deeply through society.*

'Whores," the man hissed. The men called out insults to our families for letting us play football, snatching up our bags and tipping them upside down, sending schoolbooks flying into the air and tumbling to the ground. They kicked our goalposts made of stones disdainfully away and painstakingly scuffed our pitch lines into obscurity in the dust. The ringleader grabbed a scarf that lay on the floor and shoved it hard into the face of one of the players, sending her stumbling backwards. Then, silent and seething, somehow more terrifying than he was before, he strode into the centre of the yard, a mixture of rage and pleasure in his expression. Revealing a large knife that he held up in front of us dramatically, he proceeded to stab into our football: once, twice, a third time. Then he threw it to the ground. It was a performance, like a magician putting on a show, but it was also a very real threat.

To be a young woman in Afghanistan is to grow up with violence. To learn not to fight back. To fight back is to risk being killed. If you are beaten it's because you were at fault, you must have done something wrong. There were twenty of us in the yard that day, far more of us than of them, but there was nothing we could do, because we knew the consequences. Our crime? Kicking a ball, playing sport, having fun.

We watched as the object that allowed us an escape for an hour a day lay crumpled on the floor. The man walked back to his friends and they all laughed, looking over at us, spitting on the ground before they climbed back over the wall. When they were gone, a feeling of relief rippled through the group. The ten of us exhaled at the same time.

"I told you this would happen," said one of the girls, shaking her head. Another stifled a sob.

This had all started with me kicking a ball in the schoolyard.

Our school was surrounded by tall concrete walls, which were both oppressive and freeing. They protected us girls from prying eyes and allowed the public to ignore our existence. While I waited for my mum to finish teaching, I would help myself to a ball and kick it around the yard. We didn't have any courts or pitches, just the hard stones. I would try and stay quiet to avoid drawing attention to myself, so I didn't kick the ball against the walls, but I would dribble it around and this allowed me to escape mentally. That is how my football journey really started.

Some of the girls in the younger classes saw me. They watched and chatted, moved on, and occasionally spoke to me. One day I was dribbling the ball around, imagining the players I was beating falling into the dust around me, when I felt someone watching. She was a couple of years younger than me, but already slightly taller, with short hair. I dribbled the ball over to her.

"I'm Khalida," I said.

"You need to use your other foot more," she said, frowning slightly.

"OK, coach,' I said, smiling. "What should I call you?"

"I'm Samira," she said.

And then, we were two. A tiny team.

Samira's story was like mine. Her love of sport was forged outside the oppressive culture of Afghanistan. In Iran she had played football with her brothers and found a sense of freedom in it. She was good, far better than me. She started to teach me the game properly. Before meeting her, all I had known was how to chase the ball. There was little else I could do; I didn't have any talent or skills. I just ran and kicked, intuitively following the ball rather than actively controlling it. Her personality was very different to mine: she was thoughtful and much quieter. I would run around clowning, trying to make her smile, and she would look at me, slightly puzzled, as if I was a dog riding a bicycle.

We had fun, and we could tell that people were taking an interest. So many girls had forgotten what fun looked like, and we were enjoying ourselves. Some would stand and watch, clearly wanting to join in. So we would go and ask them to play. Many didn't, walking away shyly. But some did.

> *'These men, with their knives, their power and their violence, had taken away the one thing that made us happy'*

Then we started approaching girls and expanding our ranks. We committed to getting to school early to play before classes began. School began at 7am and so we aimed to get in at 5 or 6 am. It was so liberating. We wore our school uniforms, we didn't change and we didn't care if we smelt afterwards. I would take in wet wipes and some perfume (which was banned), so the smell wasn't too bad. I sweated a lot and I was very self-conscious of it, but I wasn't going to let that stop me.

With the school quiet, we could be ourselves, we could talk, and we could also celebrate, shout and express ourselves playing football. These were new experiences and new emotions. Girls shrieking with glee at having wrongfooted the goalkeeper, before lashing the ball between the rock-goalposts against the wall, which we imagined would ripple like a net – this was not normal or accepted. Shouting for my teammate to pass me the ball or gasping loudly as my leg entwined with another's, seeking to grapple the ball free of their possession, was utterly exhilarating. These girls had spent their lives being taught that women were to exist in the shadows, on the periphery.

I organised the players around me and together our voices became louder. We embraced being vocal, brash and playful, and our eyes were opened to new emotional heights we didn't realise were possible. On the football pitch we were in charge for the first time. We made decisions. Should I pass the ball? Should I take a shot? Should I move into this space? Should I dive left or right to try and make a save? We had control. We were laser-focused. And we lapped up the opportunity to think independently.

After a few months, we had enough girls to make up two teams that could play against each other, which transformed the game for us. We would chuck down our school

*Khalida Popal, the former national football team captain (left)*

bags and play, the material of our hijabs catching in the wind as we ran, laughter ringing round the yard. Some girls played on the stony ground without shoes on. Others had shoes that were so ill-fitting and unsuited to football that if they kicked the ball their shoe would fly into the air with it, sending us all into hysterics. It was liberating, and so much fun.

Many young women joined us, of all different ages. We hid what we were doing from the principal and the teachers. We knew that they would be resistant to our activities, since it was risky for them to permit it. They were focused on shaping us into the traditional image of young womanhood: women were expected to be calm, timid and quiet, to stay home and clean, to live a life of service and to eventually bear children for their husbands. Deviating from this in any way was severely frowned upon, so we stood out as troublemakers. We began to gain reputations for having bad manners and for being brought up in the wrong way.

One evening, my mum came to my room. “Khalida, there is a rumour you are playing football at school.”

“It’s not a rumour,” I said. “We are. There are lots of us. We love it.” I was embarrassed to find that there were tears in my eyes. My mother nodded and touched my face.

From that point on, she did what she could to enable us. She wanted to give us the opportunity to continue and to expand, and she took great risks by doing so. I sensed that she was living vicariously through us, in a way. Her dreams had been taken away from her at a young age when she was forced to marry, and so in her view she would do everything she could to make sure that us girls had opportunities she didn’t have. She wanted us to access the things we were interested in and passionate about, whatever that might be. In our case it was football. She lived through our smiles and energy, through our belief that we could push back against society’s expectations of us and that things could be different.

I didn’t want my parents to see football as a barrier to my education. I felt the pressure to excel in every subject to make sure that I didn’t lose football. It was the only happiness my team-mates and I had. What had been my escape became their escape too. A small place, a bubble in the world, where we reclaimed our lost childhoods, where the predetermined futures mapped out before us, based solely on our sex, dissipated temporarily. Football allowed us to feel free. It was like magic.

There was a problem though: the noise of our voices, the shouts and sighs of our newly discovered passion carried beyond the concrete walls. We didn’t realise that people were listening on the other side. The walls made us feel like the outside world didn’t exist, but it did. People had started to pay attention on the other side, wondering what we were doing and why we were still in school in the midday heat. They were curious, confused by the sounds. And so, our sanctuary was breached.

We did take precautions; we made new rules to try and avoid attention. We played silent football. We decided we could have no screaming, no shouting, no celebrating, nothing. Silence. If we stayed quiet, hopefully whoever was lurking on the other side of the wall would lose interest. Silent football is unrealistic, though. You cannot control your emotions during a game. It’s natural to express joy, pain, frustration, disappointment. It’s instinctive, and we failed to contain ourselves.

The day when a body swung over the top and thudded down into the yard, then another, and another, and another, until there were five men looking at our makeshift pitch, punctured our joy with the reminder that we were not free. The attack illustrated to me just how powerful football could be. It was more than a game, and it could be used as a tool for pushing back against what they told us we could be.

Before they left, they walked around mockingly, like zombies, arms outstretched, legs straight with a stuttering gait. They said women couldn’t walk properly as they staggered sardonically through our safe space. “Women walk like this. How can they play football? Football is for men. It’s a man’s game. It’s not for women. Go wash the dishes. Clean the house. Go give birth.” I felt like if we stopped playing football, we would be letting them win. We would be accepting defeat. This would impact how we saw ourselves: instead of strong, autonomous individuals we would be victims. We would come to see ourselves as inferior, the way they wanted us to feel. But what they said didn’t make sense – it was nonsense – and it made me question how deep the problems in our society and in our country were.

These men had come into my space, my safe zone, near my home, into my school, in my community, in my country, and tried to stop me from being me. No. I would not acquiesce. They would not win.

I didn’t have any answers to this new problem and how to navigate it, but I knew that giving up wasn’t an option at all. I knew there were always two choices – to take action or give up – and I would fight tooth and nail rather than down tools. The day after the men climbed the wall, I turned up at our usual time, only to find fewer than half of the girls there.

“Where is everyone?” I said to Samira.

“Isn’t it obvious?” she said.

Across the yard, I saw a girl who normally played with us walking quickly in the opposite direction with her head down. “Hey! Where are you going?” I caught up with her. “Hey,” I said more gently. “You can’t let them win.”

“We’re not all lucky like you, Khalida,” she said wearily. “My father will beat me half to death if he finds out about this. Then he’ll stop me coming to school at all.”

“But you’re so good,” I said. She looked at me with something like pity.

“That doesn’t matter,” she whispered. Then she carried on walking.

I was very aware that I came from different circumstances to almost all the other girls. Like them, when I was out in the world, others made decisions on my behalf. I couldn’t wear my hair short or walk the streets without my headscarf, otherwise I would be judged. Everything about my appearance and behaviour was judged by society, and I had to act accordingly for my own safety. Likewise, at school, I had little choice and zero control. Teachers controlled what I could do and say. I was unable to push back, even in the most respectful way, without being treated as insolent and a troublemaker. But when I got home and shut the door to the world outside, I had a supportive family who were on my side. A father and brothers who were not like the man with the knife, who would defend me against them. Most of the other girls went home to men who were like that man.

I was so angry and frustrated. These men, with their knives, their power and their violence, had taken away the one thing that made us happy. They killed a small hope that had been growing among us. After we had finished playing a three-a-side game one day, Samira and I lay with our heads on a goalpost.

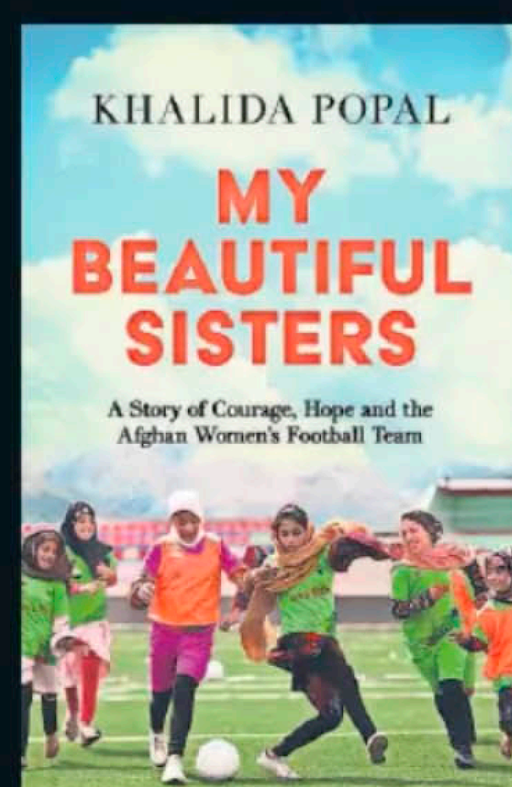
“This isn’t working,” I said. “We need more players.”

“Well, who?” said Samira. “We’ve already gone around the whole school. And most of the ones who said yes are now terrified that men are going to come climbing over the wall again.

“Face it: they’re not coming back.”

I sat up. “Then we need to find other schools.”






Carlos Alcaraz hopes to become the youngest man to win grand slams on all three surfaces
JEAN CATUFFE/DPPI/SHUTTERSTOCK

# Alcaraz's nemesis is major obstacle in a challenging year

Zverev has the game to test the Spaniard who is chasing a third grand slam title

**Tumaini Carayol**
*Roland Garros*

Even for the most precocious and gifted players, great careers do not develop without suffering. Carlos Alcaraz burst on to the ATP tour breaking age records at will, winning his first major title at the US Open and then following it up with his spectacular triumph at Wimbledon last year. The 11 months since that last victory have presented many challenges.

As his body has tried to catch up with his intensity and athleticism, Alcaraz has been sidelined by injuries, including a sprained ankle that occurred one game into his match at the Rio Open and an injury to his right forearm that has ravaged his clay season, forcing him to withdraw from tournaments in Monte Carlo, Rome and Barcelona. He arrived here having played four matches in the clay season.

When Alcaraz has been healthy enough to compete at full strength, things have not always gone perfectly. The problem with being blessed with such a varied game style, and capable of hitting so many different shots, is deciding on the right one. There have been a flurry of difficult losses as Alcaraz has played erratically, hitting himself off the court with wild unforced errors and failing to adapt when things are not working. Since his Wimbledon triumph, Alcaraz has won one title.

For the best players, adversity is an opportunity to improve. Against Jannik Sinner on Friday, Alcaraz showed once again he is an excellent learner. After starting so slowly, he adapted his game. When he found himself down two sets to one, he did not panic. He even managed to control and hide his nervous cramping, a stark departure from a year ago when his full-body cramps were so bad that he could not properly compete in the final two sets against Novak Djokovic.

**The problem with being capable of hitting so many different shots is deciding on the right one**

This run to the final has been a reflection of Alcaraz's growing maturity and he rounds on his first Roland Garros final with the stakes sky-high. It has been 20 years since none of Rafael Nadal, Djokovic and Roger Federer were present in a final here, another opportunity for Alcaraz to continue building his argument as the next great player.

Now the youngest male to reach grand slam finals on all three surfaces, Alcaraz will try to win his third major title and place himself among a distinguished group of three-time champions: Andy Murray, Arthur Ashe, Stan Wawrinka, Gustavo Kuerten and Jan Kodes.

Although Alcaraz begins as favourite, this will be an immense challenge. So far in the Spaniard's young career, his matches against Alexander Zverev have offered a great insight into his excellence and weaknesses. This will be their 10th meeting, making the German Alcaraz's most frequent opponent at ATP level. Although two of Zverev's wins occurred while Alcaraz was finding his feet on the tour, in 2021, it is notable Zverev leads their head-to-head with a 5-4 record.

All of Alcaraz's victories have been in straight sets. Each of them were exhibitions of his brilliance as he dismantled Zverev by completely overpowering him in the baseline exchanges, exposing his deep-court positioning with his drop shots and net play and feasting on his opponent's second serve.

But whenever he has entered the match even slightly off his game, such as in their Australian Open quarter-final this year and here in 2022, those occasions have turned into long nights for Alcaraz. Zverev's serve, which despite its explosiveness used to be inconsistent, has improved exponentially since he lowered his ball toss this year.

Not only is he a massive server, his high first-serve percentage in his wins against Alcaraz has rattled the Spaniard and his ability to play tidy counterpunching tennis has at times frustrated him, too.

Zverev has been knocking at the door at this tournament, reaching four consecutive semi-finals alongside his four Masters 1000 titles on clay. Once hailed as the heir to the throne, he often has extra motivation when facing the player who appears to have taken that role.

For Alcaraz, reaching this final has already been an immense effort. Alongside the growth he has shown in his run, he has managed to find his way despite far from ideal preparation. Now he will try to survive one of his toughest opponents under the glare of grand-slam pressure.

## Finalists head to head

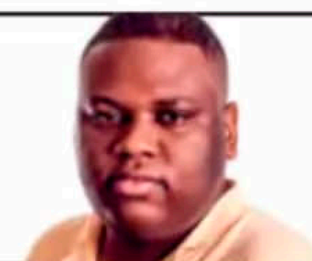
| Alexander Zverev 5 | | 4 Carlos Alcaraz |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | World ranking | 3 |
| 27 | Age | 21 |
| German | Nationality | Spanish |
| 6ft 6in | Height | 6ft |
| Right-handed | Plays | Right-handed |
| Two-handed | Backhand | Two-handed |
| 2013 | Turned pro | 2018 |
| 28/9 | YTD won/lost | 18/5 |
| 422/186 | Career W/L | 173/48 |
| 0 | Slam titles | 2 |
| $41.9m | Prize money | $29m |



# Queen of Clay Swiatek sweeps Paolini aside for fourth title

World No 1 races to 6-2, 6-1 triumph in an hour and eight minutes and proves yet again she is Paris royalty

**Tumaini Carayol**
*Roland Garros*



In the aftermath of Iga Swiatek's first grand slam triumph at the Covid-ravaged French Open in the autumn of 2020, one of her primary emotions was confusion. Her victory had been so unexpected, and the subsequent rush of attention so overwhelming, that it left her with many doubts. She had to prove to herself more than anyone else that her maiden win was not a fluke and that she could establish herself as a champion on a consistent basis.

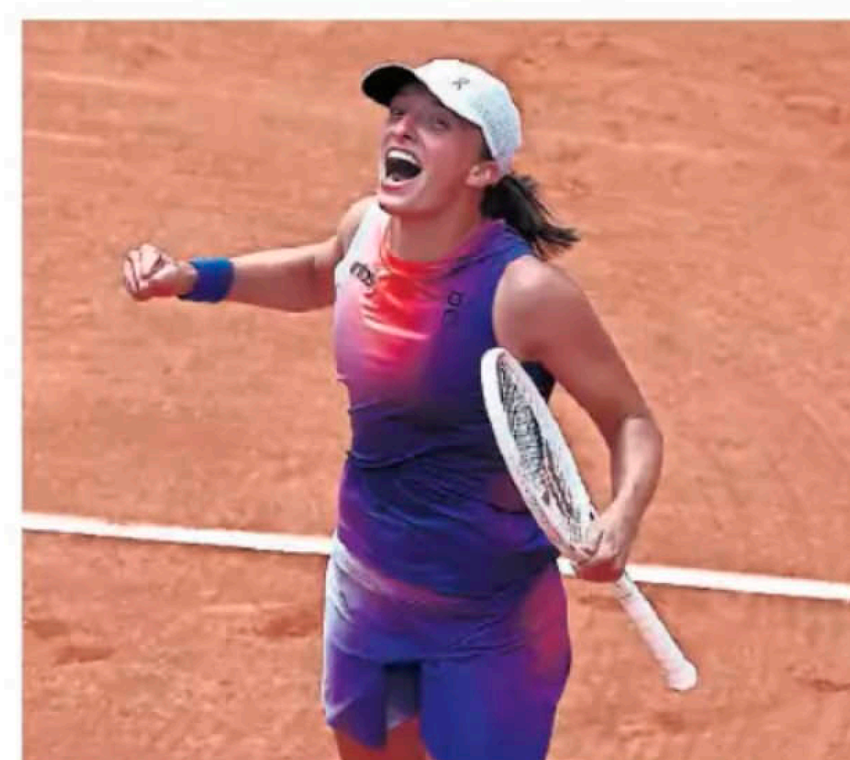
It is fair to say she has done a decent job. Swiatek continued her era of relentless dominance here as she completely overwhelmed Jasmine Paolini despite the Italian's gutsy start, closing out her third consecutive French Open title and



● Appearing in her first Grand Slam final, Jasmine Paolini was powerless to stop Swiatek in Paris
THIBAULT CAMUS/AP

● Iga Swiatek (below) shows her delight after the winning point
YVES HERMAN/REUTERS





fourth overall with an easy 6-2, 6-1 win in 68 minutes.

"It was an emotional win, because I felt a lot of stress yesterday and today in the morning," said Swiatek. "I knew if I'm going to just focus on tennis I can fight through it and at the end it all went how I wanted. So I just felt really proud of myself."

With another title, the world No 1 continues to stake her claim as a potential great and one of the most successful clay-court players of all time. The records are endless: at 23 years old she is the youngest woman to win a fourth French Open title, two years younger than the previous youngest, Justine Henin. Her record is 35-2 (95%) at Roland Garros and 84-10 (89%) on clay. Somehow, this still feels like the beginning of her story in Paris.

Paolini described facing Swiatek at this venue as the toughest thing in tennis. "To play her here, it's something different," she said. "She won already four titles, and she's still [23] years old. These numbers are not normal, they are something unbelievable."

This victory also marks a shift in the overall record books. With five grand slam titles, Swiatek now owns the most majors among regularly active players – the seven-time champion Venus Williams plays only occasionally – and she moves level with Maria Sharapova and Martina Hingis on total grand slam titles in the open era.

While four of her titles have come on clay in Paris, Swiatek has won 12 of her 22 career titles on hard courts and she has enjoyed her 106 weeks at No 1. It is only a matter of time before she adds to her count elsewhere.

Before her irresistible run through the second week, Swiatek had been one point from defeat against a resurgent Naomi Osaka in their instant classic second-round match, which Swiatek won 7-6(1), 1-6, 7-5 after trailing 2-5, 0-30 in the final set. She joins a select list of players who have won a major title after facing match point.

While warming down after her narrow escape, Swiatek cried hard in the gym as the stress and tension escaped her. Then she composed herself, set her sights on the rest of the field and never looked back. Although Osaka won 17 games against Swiatek, the Pole's other six opponents won 20 games combined.

Swiatek said that recovering to win the tournament from such a position has imbued her with the feeling she should always believe in herself, regardless of the circumstances.

"I'll always try my best no matter what the score is. Sometimes it's going to add up like that, sometimes I'm going to lose. But when you're trying your best, it's always the best solution, because you have no regrets and you can turn tournaments into something like that," she said, pointing at her trophy.

In by far the biggest occasion of her blossoming career, Paolini was initially determined to remain on top of the baseline, attacking with her heavy forehand. At times, she practically threw herself forward while trying to meet the ball on the rise and take the first strike in the point. She immediately settled down by breaking for a 2-1 lead.

**'It was an emotional win, because I felt a lot of stress. I just felt really proud of myself'**
**Iga Swiatek**

Those positive moments did not last very long. The problem for Paolini is that Swiatek performs almost every facet of her game at a higher level. Paolini's excellent topspin forehand guided her to a first major final, but Swiatek's forehand is even heavier and more vicious. She is also a greater athlete and returner, armed with a much better backhand and serve.

In the very next service game, Swiatek eviscerated her diminutive opponent's feeble serve and easily retrieved the break. It would set the tone for how she handled it throughout the match.

"I tried to play my best, but it's not easy to play at that intensity," said Paolini. "I never played a player that has this intensity before in my life."

While another opponent was left with no choice but to force themselves far out of their comfort zone, Swiatek was completely at ease. She flattened Paolini's serve, her own improved serve continued to generate free points and she worked the Italian off the court, dominating the rallies. After trailing 1-2, Swiatek bulldozed through 10 games in a row before serving out another title.

As Swiatek lifted her trophy, the great Chris Evert stood beside her on the podium. Evert has been the women's record holder here since 1986 with seven titles. By the time Swiatek's career is over, there is a chance that may no longer be the case.

## Iga's crowns

Swiatek's French Open triumphs

**2024**
bt **Jasmine Paolini** (It) 6-2, 6-1
**2023**
bt **Karolina Muchova** (Cz Rep) 6-2, 5-7, 6-4
**2022**
bt **Coco Gauff** (US) 6-1, 6-3
**2020**
bt **Sofia Kenin** (US) 6-4, 6-1

Cycling

# Wiebes takes stage-three win as Kopecky holds the lead

**Tom Basham**

SD Worx-Protime's dominance of the Tour of Britain Women continued on stage three as Lorena Wiebes won the sprint for the line in Warrington. It was her team's third straight victory in the race and it is entirely conceivable they could secure a clean sweep in today's finale.

The general classification leader, Lotte Kopecky, illustrated her team's iron-fisted grip on the four-stage race by setting up her SD Worx-Protime colleague Wiebes for the win.

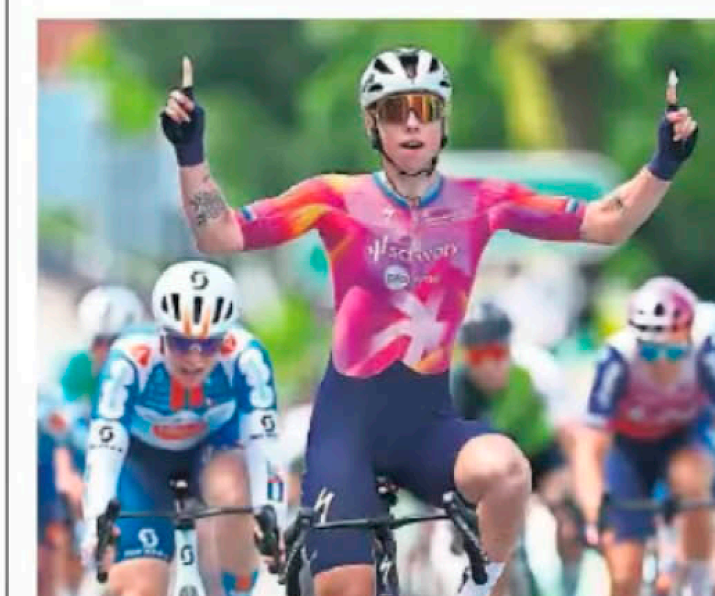
The Belgian, who maintained her 17-second lead over Britain's Anna Henderson, guided Wiebes to within 200m of the finish line. Dutch sprinter Wiebes then powered away to outlast Charlotte Kool (DSM-Firmenich PostNL), as Georgia Baker (Liv-AlUla-Jayco) finished third.

It will take a decisive move from one of her rivals during stage four to get Kopecky out of the leader's green jersey, with bonus seconds on the line not enough to change the general classification standings alone. Given SD Worx-Protime had three riders in the top 15 places on stage three, that kind of turnaround seems unlikely.

"The team did a really good job all day controlling the breakaway," stage winner Wiebes said afterwards. "We kept Christine [Majerus], Lotte, Barbara [Guarischi] and me together for the final. Christine delivered us really well through the corner and it was a really fast finish."

Yesterday's narrative was largely written by a two-rider breakaway of British riders Jo Tindley and Maddie Leech, who attacked with 102km to go and built a gap of four minutes. Leech suffered mechanical problems and had to drop back after the second Queen of the Mountains checkpoint. Tindley was able to continue solo, but she was eventually caught

In the Critérium du Dauphiné, Primoz Roglic and his Bora-Hansgrohe team closed in on overall victory as the Slovenian won stage seven and extended his lead over Matteo Jorgenson in the general classification standings to 1min 2secs. Roglic attacked with around 250m to go to the summit at Samoëns 1600 to finish narrowly ahead of Jorgenson and Giulio Ciccone (Lidl-Trek).



● Lorena Wiebes celebrates her stage three victory in Warrington

# 'His legacy will endure': Wembley unites to salute Burrow

Will Unwin

"In a world full of adversity we must still dare to dream," was Rob Burrow's message, embossed on the players' shirts as they entered the pitch for the women's and men's Challenge Cup finals. The death of the former Leeds Rhino was mourned and his life celebrated in equal measure at Wembley to show his legacy will live on in rugby league and beyond.

Burrow's No 7 was daubed on the halfway line above the message #OneRobBurrow, which was also on the Rhinos shirts, as he was honoured in a competition he won twice as a player for Leeds where he spent 17 years, playing 492 matches. It was not only his ability on the pitch that made Burrow, who died last weekend at the age of 41, a hero but also his determination to raise awareness of motor neurone disease and money to help prevent others suffering as he did after being diagnosed with the condition in 2019, two years after retiring.

Burrow's beloved Rhinos were in the women's final but Warriors, Wolves and Saints also took time to pay their respects as blue and yellow dominated the memorials.

Each match started with a perfectly observed silence followed by 60 seconds of applause in the seventh minute – a nod to Burrow's number throughout his career, which also resulted in the men's final kicking off at 3.07pm. Burrow was shown with the Challenge Cup in hand on the big screen and banners were spread across the stands.

At Wembley Park underground station, there was another banner showing Burrow's words. "A lad from Yorkshire who got to live out his dream," it read. Wherever anyone looked around, Burrow was rarely far away.

This was the first chance for many to say goodbye. More Leeds fans than expected travelled to London, knowing they could come together to celebrate their fallen lionheart. The players warmed up with "7 Burrow" on their shirts to make sure he was with them.

After an emotional week, the Rhinos were unable to lift spirits with victory in the women's final. Their players looked visibly affected during the pre-match silence on a day they failed to cope with St Helens.

As another message left at Wembley declared: "Rob's legacy will endure through his incredible work and the treatment centre that will bear his name."

Burrow is gone, but what he has left behind will not be forgotten.



# Peet's Wigan complete clean sweep to join pantheon of all-time greats

## Warriors too strong for Warrington on poignant day as sport pays its tributes to a legend

| 8 | 18 |
|---|---|
| WARRINGTON | WIGAN |

Aaron Bower
*Wembley*

Perhaps it was fitting on the day rugby league came together to celebrate one of its most iconic and legendary players, Wigan created a piece of history that will, like Rob Burrow's playing career, stand the test of time for years to come.

We throw words like 'legend' and 'history' around all too easily these days. But those two words felt fitting to describe this emotionally stirring day for rugby league and its most famous club. The death of Burrow last Sunday united the entire sport on the biggest day in the calendar, providing a series of fitting tributes to a legendary player, but even more legendary man.

Just as Burrow's Leeds Rhinos swept aside all comers in 2015, Wigan are now almost certainly in the conversation about the greatest club side the modern era has seen. Six teams have held all four major domestic trophies – the Super League title, the League Leader's Shield, the World Club Challenge and the Challenge Cup – at the same time.

Wigan are now in that bracket after claiming the cup in the kind of manner we have come to expect from this team in recent years. Matt Peet, a relative nobody outside of Wigan when he was appointed for the 2022 season, has become one of the most successful coaches, with this his fifth major honour in two and a half seasons.

His teams are methodical, they are resolute and, in the right moments, they are devastating. That gameplan was executed to full effect here as they struck when it mattered against Warrington Wolves to secure a record-extending 21st Challenge Cup, and a first at Wembley since 2013.

Leading 12-2 at half-time, Wigan always felt like they had Warrington at arm's length thereafter.

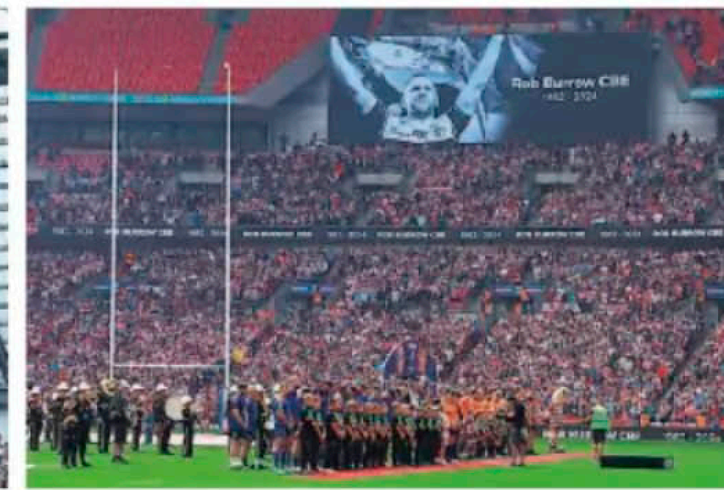
Peet tasted Challenge Cup success at Tottenham two years ago but this club, and this town, are synonymous with Wembley, undoubtedly making this win more noteworthy.

"Today is special because it's at Wembley," he said. "Tottenham was special because it was at Tottenham. All you can do is enjoy the day and that's what we are going to do."









*Tributes to Rob Burrow (clockwise from top left): Leeds players at the women's final, fans outside the stadium and salutes at Twickenham and Wembley*

> 'Today is special. All you can do is enjoy the day and that's what we're going to do'
> **Matt Peet**

The challenge now for Wigan is one that feels eminently realistic: become only the fourth Super League team to win the treble in one season – with Burrow's Leeds side of 2015 among that bracket. "Enjoy tonight, enjoy this week, keep trying to get better – it never feels like we're done," he said. "I just like working with this lot. I love them to bits and I'm very proud of them."

*Wigan's captain, Liam Farrell, lifts the trophy as his teammates celebrate*

TOM JENKINS/ THE OBSERVER

There were poignant and touching tributes to Burrow before and during the game, including a minute's silence, both sets of players wearing Burrow-themed shirts to walk on to the Wembley turf and a minute's applause in the seventh minute. However, before that had arrived, there had already been plenty of controversy.

Two yellow cards inside the opening three minutes threatened to set the tone for the wrong reasons, with Wigan's Mike Cooper and Warrington's Matt Dufty sent to the sin-bin for separate tackles. By the time the pair returned, the Wolves took a 2-0 lead through the boot of Josh Thewlis. But that was as good as it really got for the Wolves.

They have been magnificent under Sam Burgess this season but this was one of their most disappointing performances.

As their head coach insinuated, the occasion got to his side. "We didn't perform the way we'd played all year," he said. "I'm disappointed for the players. We put a lot of effort in getting here. We just didn't get our game on today. The occasion probably got us a tiny bit."

They fell behind when Zach Eckersley scored the first try, in his fifth senior appearance, before the outstanding Bevan French scored a wonderful solo try. French was voted the Lance Todd Trophy winner, another fitting moment: he lost his own mother in 2021 after a battle against MND and is the first Australian half-back to win the trophy since 1985.

Those two tries, establishing a 12-2 lead for the Warriors at half-time, felt commanding. The onus was on Warrington to score next to avoid the final running away from them but as the hour mark approached, it was Wigan who struck a telling blow. Liam Farrell, the only survivor from Wigan's last Wembley win in 2013, finished a wonderful break from Jai Field and the game felt done.

Warrington threatened a comeback with Dufty's try in the final minutes but as they have done so many times in the past, Wigan had the wherewithal to close out a final with minimal fuss.

It is a theme we are fast becoming accustomed to. Wigan will certainly be proud of their achievements – but rugby league on the whole should be proud of the showing it put on for Burrow.

| Warrington | Wigan |
| --- | --- |
| Dufty; Thewlis, King, Tai, Ashton; Williams, Drinkwater; Harrison, Walker, Vaughan, Nicholson, Fitzgibbon, Currie | Field; Miski, Eckersley, Wardle, Marshall; French, Smith; Thompson, O'Neill, Cooper, Nsemba, Farrell, Ellis |
| **Sin bin** Dufty | **Sin bin** Cooper |
| **Interchange** Bullock Musgrove Crowther Powell | **Interchange** Havard Byrne Mago Leeming |
| **Try** Dufty **Goals** Thewlis 2 | **Tries** Eckersley, French, Farrell **Goals** Smith 3 |

**Referee** Chris Kendall **Attendance** 64,845

## Athletics European Championships




*George Mills (left) on a lap of honour after winning silver; Romell Glave (below) on his way to 100m bronze*

ALEKSANDRA SZMIGIEL/ REUTERS; FILIPPO MONTEFORTE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

# Mills proud to take silver after chasing Ingebrigtsen home

### Son of former England footballer picks up first major medal in 5,000m

**Sean Ingle**
*Rome*

Some athletes celebrate their first major medal with a night on the town. Others, with a modest drink or two. But after George Mills had won a gutsy European championship 5,000m silver behind only the brilliant Norwegian Jakob Ingebrigtsen, he promised that his only indulgence would be some fermented kombucha – if he could find any in Rome – before going back into hard training today.

But what a performance Mills produced in only his third run over the distance. After a slow race, Ingebrigtsen, the reigning Olympic 1500m champion and double 5,000m world champion, pushed for home at the bell. Yet the 25-year-old Mills refused to submit, harrying his esteemed rival down the back straight before Ingebrigtsen powered away to win his third European 5,000m title in 13mins 20.11sec.

Mills was only just over a second back to comfortably secure Britain's first medal of these European championships. And, as he admitted afterwards, he did briefly believe that he might emulate his fellow Britons Jake Wightman and Josh Kerr by outsprinting Ingebrigtsen in a major championship.

"Coming down the back straight I was like, 'My legs feel OK, but I'm hurting.' But he had another gear – he's a world class Olympic champion. So it shows the level I've got to get to."

Asked how he would celebrate, Mills replied: "No celebration. Nothing at all. It's mid-season, the season finishes mid-September."

"Running is what I love," he added. "I'll enjoy going for a run on Sunday doing my next session. I think if you're celebrating mid-season, it's a bit weird."

But while Mills junior refused to be carried away, his proud dad, Danny, who played 19 times for England, was understandably thrilled. "He is one of the most dedicated athletes I know," said Mills, citing the moment his son went to join the ON training camp in Switzerland as a key turning point. "I have spent my whole life in sport. And with George there's no stone unturned.

"You work 10 years for moments like this and then you get 13 minutes to perform," he added. "It's like having a 13-minute penalty shootout. It's just sudden death from the beginning – you're waiting for somebody to miss because there are so many things that can go wrong. But he believed in himself. And he backed himself. We're a very proud family this evening."

Mills senior never played in the Stadio Olimpico, but he was on the bench when Leeds beat Lazio and drew with Roma here. "So Rome's a good place for the Mills family," he added. "I think we might come back."

There was a second medal for Britain on the night in the men's 100m as Romell Glave finished in third behind the Olympic champion Marcell Jacobs.

In truth Jacobs did not have to be at his dominant best to win in 10.02sec, ahead of his compatriot Chituru Ali, who ran 10.05. Glave was always in contention but could do no better than run 10.06. The other Briton in the field, CJ Ujah, did not make it out of the semi-finals after running 10.24.

Earlier in the night, a high quality men's long jump final was won by the Olympic and world champion Miltiádis Tentóglou in a European championship record 8.65m.

The Greek, who has described World Athletics' proposals to remove the long jump board as "dog shit", beat the exciting Italian teenager Mattia Furlani, who took silver in 8.38m, with Britain's Jacob Fincham-Dukes fourth with 8.12m.

Another Olympic champion, Belgium's Nafi Thiam, won the women's heptathlon with a championship best score of 6,848. That was 213 points ahead of French athlete Auriana Lazraq-Khlass, who took silver. Britain's Jade O'Dowda was sixth in a personal best of 6314.

A third championship best came in the women's 100m hurdles with the French star Cyréna Samba-Mayela taking gold in 12.31sec. Britain's Cindy Sember was fourth in 12.56.

Meanwhile another Briton, Scott Lincoln, can count himself unlucky after finishing fourth in the men's shot put – just six centimetres off a medal – after throwing 20.88m. The event was won by Leonardo Fabbri in 22.45m.

It was Italy's fifth gold so far of these championships and their 10th medal overall.




## British sprinter shatters 10sec barrier in US

**Over 9.95 stunning seconds the British sprinter Louie Hinchliffe became the first European to win the men's 100m at the United States' National Collegiate Athletic Association Championships. Afterwards the 21-year-old from Sheffield revealed how a WhatsApp message to the nine-time Olympic champion Carl Lewis asking him: "Can you fix me?" had changed his life.**

**"I gave it everything, it's what I've been working for the whole year," said Hinchliffe after a late burst gave him victory in Eugene, Oregon, in a time that makes him the sixth-quickest Briton ever.**



**But, as he acknowledged, it has been some journey given that until the age of 16 he wanted to be a professional golfer and that, when he went to the University of Lancaster to study management and IT at 18, he spent more time partying than running as there was no track nearby. "I would get on a bus twice a week, 30 minutes away, to train," he said. "I didn't have any support, I was just a regular student."** **Sean Ingle**

# Britain's pentathlon power couple left facing the end of their Olympic dream





Joe Choong and Liv Green both hope to be competing in Paris next month. Choong (inset) with his gold in Tokyo
SAM FROST/THE OBSERVER

**With showjumping set for the scrap heap Joe Choong and Liv Green fear they will have to quit, they tell *Ben Bloom***

At the end of a quiet, unassuming cul-de-sac, a steep hike from the centre of Bath, there is little giveaway of the dual Olympic ambition that has long absorbed the occupants of the last apartment on the street. But for those in the know, the signs are there: the vast number of trainers overwhelming the shoe rack outside the front door, the massage gun discarded on the sofa, the photograph on the window ledge showing two people beaming at the red-carpet premiere of the James Bond film *No Time to Die*.

The harsh, unforgiving world of elite sport is not a particularly welcoming place to find a fellow partner. Common ground located in shared aspirations can easily be lost in the cut-throat reality of individual success and failure. Joe Choong and Liv Green know that all too well.

Their presence at that London film premiere came courtesy of the Olympic modern pentathlon gold medal Choong had won a couple of months earlier. So, too, when they travelled to Paris this year as guest diners at the final banquet for *Great British Menu*. "Being his plus-one has got me to some really cool events," says Green. "I've bunny-hopped along."

The hope was – and, just about, still is – that she can shed the plus-one tag at the Olympics next month. While the 29-year-old heads to Paris as the man to beat after adding successive world titles to his Olympic crown, Green claimed a European Games bronze of her own last summer.

Britain's pentathlon power couple – whose sport combines fencing, swimming, showjumping, running and shooting – seemed on track to realise their dream of competing together in the French capital. But with Green experiencing a dip in results at just the wrong time, the 24-year-old's hopes are dwindling of gaining one of the two spots in a British women's team that possesses unparalleled depth. Barring a remarkable performance at the world championships that began in China yesterday, she is likely to miss out.

"Hopefully, it doesn't go that way," she says, cradling a cup of tea in their kitchen. "I would be really disappointed but it happens so I'd just have to deal with it. I'll just be happy to watch Joe compete and try to support him as best I can."

That support – so often unseen – has been taken to extremes in the past. For the Covid-delayed Tokyo Games, held in 2021, Green sacrificed much of her life to help ensure her boyfriend's health for a period in the buildup.

> *'I still live in the same house and drive the same car so my gold medal has not been life-changing'*
> *Joe Choong*

Suffering a badly sprained ankle and unable to train, Green had the option of enjoying her summer and living as normal a life as the pandemic allowed, which would have meant being unable to see Choong for the risk of giving him Covid. Instead, she hunkered down with her partner.

"It was very hard for me," she says. "I didn't really have a life so it wasn't a pleasant time, but it was worth it to support Joe, and he got his gold medal, which was amazing."

Over recent weeks, Choong's support in return has included staying up all night to help a distraught Green craft an ultimately unsuccessful appeal letter after she was not selected for a crucial pre-Olympics competition – a decision that appears to have laid a path to her absence from the British team for Paris.

It is not the ideal backdrop for an Olympic champion to defend their title and Choong admits having the support bubble of his girlfriend in the camp would provide him with the best opportunity of earning a second gold medal. But he laughs at the audacity of ever asking for Green to be selected for his benefit: "I wouldn't expect that in a million years."

Results over recent seasons suggest he stands a fair chance of becoming the first British pentathlete to win two Olympic medals. Should that be gold it would doubtless grow his profile far beyond a sport that struggles to puncture the public consciousness.

"I've had some nice products and some sponsorship off the back of my gold medal," says Choong, as Green delves into a cupboard to find some luxury high-performance tea he has been sent. "But I still live in the same house and still drive the same car so it's not been life-changing like you would imagine."

There is another reason for Choong's desire to win gold in Paris; extra motivation to stand atop the podium. This is likely to be the end for him as a pentathlete.

While Choong was realising a lifetime's goal of Olympic gold, the sport was gathering unwanted attention when a German coach was thrown out of the Games after punching a horse that refused to jump. After that controversy, the sport's governing body confirmed showjumping would be replaced by Ninja Warrior-style obstacle racing after the Paris Olympics.

Choong has been one of the most outspoken against the move, criticising the decision-making process and arguing athlete voices were not considered. Instead of attempting to start from scratch in a discipline he has never tried, Choong has suggested he will most likely retire from pentathlon after competing in Paris – a statement that prompted the governing body's president, Klaus Schormann, to glibly respond: "OK, bye bye."

Choong, a maths graduate, says: "That was hilarious, really. I can't imagine many other international sports presidents being so personal. I thought that summed up how he treats the athlete community. It's an echo chamber in the senior leadership where one of them will have an idea and the rest of them will go for it, rather than getting external expertise."

Unless Green can force the selectors' hands at the world championships in China it means their yearning to compete together at an Olympics will never be realised.

For Green, five years her boyfriend's junior, she hopes there is no end in sight, regardless of whether she makes it to Paris or not. But, like the rest of the pentathlon world, she has no idea whether she possesses the ability to continue in an altered sport. "I definitely will give it a try to see if I enjoy it and if I'm good at it," she says. "But I've never done an obstacle race."

The future remains clouded in uncertainty and they could have left the much-changed sport by the time the Los Angeles Olympics roll around in four years' time. Of more immediate concern is the great unknown of Paris and whether Green will be on the startline or watching from the stands.

"The biggest problem I'd have is you only get two tickets as an athlete," says Choong, joking. "So I'd have to choose between Liv and my parents."



Joe Choong in the showjumping at the 2016 Olympics. It will be replaced in 2028




MATHIEU BELANGER/REUTERS

George Russell reacts after sealing pole. He said later: 'Every lap we have done, the car has been feeling good'

# Russell's pole leaves Mercedes hopeful of having turned corner

## Briton edges out world champion Verstappen, who records same time

**Giles Richards**

The drought at Mercedes has been a long, arduous affair. Little wonder, then, that they revelled in the chance to slake their thirst in qualifying for the Canadian Grand Prix where George Russell claimed pole by the tiniest of margins, indeed, by no margin at all with a time exactly matched by Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

This was perhaps the most tense session thus far this year and at the death, Russell had the top spot with a time of 1min 12.000sec, a lap then equalled by Verstappen at the circuit Gilles Villeneuve. The world champion was denied pole by dint of Russell having set the time first.

Russell and Mercedes were not concerned by how close it had been, simply returning to the top spot was an achievement for the team which has struggled so hard since the new regulations of 2022. It is the team's first pole since Hungary in 2023 and they have now not taken a victory since Brazil 2022 when Russell took the flag. Today's race in Montreal is their best shot at another since then, with the pace of the car genuinely impressive.

They had brought their new front wing to Canada, after a series of small upgrades over recent races amid optimism they might make a genuine step forward and so it proved. The car looked in better balance, handling with more confidence than it has all season and both Russell and his teammate, Lewis Hamilton, were enlivened in finally having a decent ride beneath them. They had real pace in the low-speed corners and crucially in the chicanes on the straights where an ability to attack the kerbs can make a lap, although Hamilton, who had been close to his teammate throughout, could not improve on his final run and he dropped down to seventh.

There was nonetheless a real sense that a corner might have been turned at Mercedes.

"Every lap we have done this weekend the car has been feeling good," Russell said. "This is the first two races we have had with the upgrades and it is looking good so far.

"As we have entered the last six months we have been able to fine tune what we want from the car. Let's see if this performance is sustainable but I don't see any reason why not and I think we have more to come."

A beaming Toto Wolff, the Mercedes team principal who has presented a stern visage for so long, also conceded with a grin that they were at last "going in the right direction".

It was a qualifying session where timing was crucial after the rain over the weekend as the track was rubbering-in, gaining grip on every lap. The times improved as the clock counted down, with the final laps proving absolutely crucial as Mercedes, for the first time in more than a year, looked like the favourites. Once a staple of the sport, that it felt almost out of the ordinary was testament to their fall from grace.

They knew the car was good but Russell still had to deliver and he did so with admirable finesse and calm on a demanding track.

On the first final runs Verstappen had opened with the top spot but Russell and Hamilton had the edge on their opening laps, within two-tenths of one another, with Russell three-tenths clear of Verstappen setting the 1min 12sec time.

With new tyres on, Verstappen came back at him, quickest in the first sector as he threw the car at the lap and matched the British driver to the thousandth of a second. Russell did not improve but he had done enough. Indeed, potentially enough if he can hold his lead into turn one to offer Mercedes a well of victory from which they can drink deep today.

## Today's grid

**Canadian Grand Prix**
**Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, Montreal**
**7pm, *Live on Sky Sports F1***

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 **G Russell** (GB) Mercedes | 1:12.000 |
| 2 **M Verstappen** (Neth) Red Bull | 1:12.000 |
| 3 **L Norris** (GB) McLaren | 1:12.021 |
| 4 **O Piastri** (Aus) McLaren | 1:12.103 |
| 5 **D Ricciardo** (Aus) RB | 1:12.178 |
| 6 **F Alonso** (Sp) Aston Martin | 1:12.228 |
| 7 **L Hamilton** (GB) Mercedes | 1:12.280 |
| 8 **Y Tsunoda** (Jpn) RB | 1:12.414 |
| 9 **L Stroll** (Can) Aston Martin | 1:12.701 |
| 10 **A Albon** (Tha) Williams | 1:12.796 |
| 11 **C Leclerc** (Mon) Ferrari | 1:12.691 |
| 12 **C Sainz** (Sp) Ferrari | 1:12.728 |
| 13 **L Sargeant** (US) Williams | 1:12.736 |
| 14 **K Magnussen** (Den) Haas | 1:12.916 |
| 15 **P Gasly** (Fr) Alpine | 1:12.940 |
| 16 **S Pérez** (Mex) Red Bull | 1:13.326 |
| 17 **V Bottas** (Fin) Sauber | 1:13.366 |
| 18 **N Hülkenberg** (Ger) Haas | 1:13.978 |
| 19 **Zhou G** (Chn) Sauber | 1:14.292 |
| 20 **E Ocon*** (Fr) Alpine | 1:13.435 |

*Ocon received a five-place grid penalty*

**Drivers' standings**
1 Verstappen (Red Bull) 5 wins 169pts
2 Leclerc (Ferrari) 1 win 138pts
3 Norris (McLaren) 1 win 113pts

# In brief



Jon Rahm withdrew midway through the second round in Houston

Golf

## Rahm withdrawal casts US Open doubt

Jon Rahm is a fitness doubt for the US Open after pulling out of LIV Golf Houston during the second round. The two-time major champion withdrew after six holes with a foot infection. Rahm was even par for his round – three under for the tournament – when he was unable to continue. The year's third major starts on Thursday at Pinehurst No 2. Rahm won the 2021 US Open but his form in this season's majors has been unimpressive. He tied for 45th in his Masters title defence and missed the cut at last month's US PGA Championship. **Staff**

Rugby league

## Gaskin stars as Saints secure four in a row

Faye Gaskin inspired St Helens to a fourth straight Women's Challenge Cup crown with a ruthless 22-0 win over Leeds at Wembley. Gaskin crashed over for the first of four Saints tries and kicked three conversions to cap a clinical performance from Matty Smith's side who extended their grip on the trophy. Leeds again froze on the big stage and ran out of ideas long before the final hooter as they slid to their third final defeat in a row. Tries from Phoebe Hook, Luci McColm and Chantelle Crowl wrapped up a thoroughly one-sided Saints win. **PA Media**

Wheelchair tennis

## Reid 'looking forward' after French Open win

Britain's Alfie Hewett and Gordon Reid won the men's wheelchair doubles final at the French Open for a fifth successive year. The top seeds dropped five games as they beat Japanese duo Takuya Miki and Tokito Oda 6-1 6-4. The event provided a taster for the Olympics for the 20-time grand slam winners. "We're all here staying locally, talking about how things are going to look and feel when the Games are on," said Reid. "Once on the court you're just really focused as any other match in a grand slam, but maybe now we can enjoy it and look forward a little bit further." **PA Media**

# Results

## Football

**MEN'S INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLIES**

**Spain** (4) 5 **Northern Ireland** (1) 1
Pedri 12 30, Morata 19, Fabián 35, Oyarzabal 60; Ballard 2

Belgium 3 Luxembourg 0; Brunei 1 Sri Lanka 0; Denmark 3 Norway 1; Hungary 3 Israel 0; Moldova 3 Cyprus 2; Peru 0 Paraguay 0; Portugal 1 Croatia 2; Slovenia 1 Bulgaria 1; Sweden 0 Serbia 3; Switzerland 1 Austria 1; United States L Colombia L

**CAF WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS**
**Group D** Cameroon 4 Cape Verde 1. **Group F** Gambia 5 Seychelles 1

**CONCACAF WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS**
**Group A** Cayman Islands L Antigua and Barbuda L. **Group B** Bahamas L Trinidad and Tobago L. **Group E** British Virgin Islands 0 Guatemala 3. **Group F** Anguilla 0 Suriname 4

## Rugby union

**GALLAGHER PREMIERSHIP**
**Final** Northampton 25 Bath 21

**UNITED CHAMPIONSHIP**
**Quarter-finals** Bulls 30 Benetton 23; Glasgow Warriors 27 Stormers 10; Leinster 43 Ulster 20

## Rugby league

**BETFRED MEN'S CHALLENGE CUP**
**Final** Warrington 8 Wigan 18

**BETFRED WOMEN'S CHALLENGE CUP**
**Final** Leeds 0 St Helens 22

**1895 CUP**
**Final** Sheffield 6 Wakefield 50

## Tennis

**FRENCH OPEN** (Roland Garros, Paris)
**Women: Final: I SWIATEK** (Pol, 1) bt J PAOLINI (It, 12) 6-2 6-1
**Men: Doubles: Final: M AREVALO & M PAVIC** (ElS/Cro) bt S BOLELLI & A VAVASSORI (It/It, 11) 7-5 6-3

## Cricket

**MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP**
**Group C** Providence Afghanistan 159-6 (Rahmanullah Gurbaz 80). New Zealand 75 (Fazalhaq Farooqi 4-17, Mohammad Nabi 4-17). Afghanistan beat New Zealand by 84 runs.
**Group D** Grand Prairie Sri Lanka 124-9. Bangladesh 125-8 (IDN Thushara 4-18). Bangladesh beat Sri Lanka by two wickets.
New York Netherlands 103-9 (OEG Baartman 4-11). South Africa 106-6 (DA Miller 59 no). South Africa beat Netherlands by four wickets.

**VITALITY BLAST**
Edgbaston Durham 194-9 (DG Bedingham 63). Warwickshire 168 (J Bethell 50, BA Raine 5-21). Durham beat Warwickshire by 26 runs.

**CHARLOTTE EDWARDS CUP**
Edgbaston Northern Diamonds 137-7 (HJ Armitage 62). Central Sparks 124-8. Northern Diamonds beat Central Sparks by 13 runs.

## Darts

**NORDIC MASTERS** (Copenhagen, Denmark)
**Semi-finals: G Price** (Wal) bt M Smith (Eng) 7-3; **R Cross** (Eng) bt L Humphries (Eng) 7-4
**Final: G Price** (Wal) bt R Cross (Eng) 8-5

## Cycling

**CRITERIUM DU DAUPHINE** (France)
**Stage 7** (Albertville - Samons, 145.5km): **1** P Roglic (Svn) Bora-hansgrohe 4hr 29min 16sec; **2** M Jorgenson (US) Team Visma | Lease A Bike at same time; **3** G Ciccone (It) Lidl-trek +02. **Selected others: 21** D Rafferty (Ire) EF Education-EasyPost + 05:08; **43** J Tarling (GB) Ineos Grenadiers +10:23
**Overall standings: 1** P Roglic (Svn) Bora-hansgrohe 21hour 16min 50sec; **2** M Jorgenson (US) Team Visma | Lease A Bike +01:02; **3** D Gee (Can) Israel-premier Tech +01:13. **Selected others: 25** D Rafferty (Ire) Ef Education-easypost +15:17

## Golf

**USPGA THE MEMORIAL TOURNAMENT** (Dublin, Ohio)
**Leading second-round scores** (US unless stated, Par 72): **135** S Scheffler 67 68. **138** A Hadwin (Can) 66 72; V Hovland (Nor) 69 69. **139** C Bezuidenhout (SA) 72 67; K Bradley 70 69. **140** L Aaberg (Swe) 68 72. **141** A Bhatia 69 72; T Finau 71 70; R McIlroy (NI) 70 71; X Schauffele 68 73. **142** T Fleetwood (Eng) 69 73; Kim S (Kor) 72 70; C Morikawa 68 74; S Straka (Aut) 72 70

**LPGA SHOPRITE CLASSIC** (Seaview, New Jersey, USA)
**Leading first-round scores** (US unless stated, Par 71): **61** A Yubol (Tha). **63** Shin J (Kor). **64** An N (Kor). **65** N Hataoka (Jpn); M Khang; S Kyriacou (Aus); A Valenzuela (Swi); Hsu WL (Tai); B Lincicome; Lee J (Kor). **66** R Kuehn; B Henderson (Can); A Muñoz (Sp); Y Noh; H Shibuno (Jpn); R Choi (Aus)

## Greg Wood's tips

**PERTH** **1.27** Bishop Hill (nap) **1.57** Dapper Gent **2.32** Malangen **3.07** Fix At All **3.42** Hang In There **4.17** Giovanni Change **4.52** Dequall **5.27** Diamond State
**GOODWOOD** **2.10** Toimy Son **2.45** Principality **3.20** Clay Shoveler **3.55** Sea Just In Time **4.30** Hedonista (nb) **5.05** Aimeric **5.40** Change Sings

# Jonathan Wilson

*Inside football*



# Georgia and Albania blow in as Euros feel full force of the east's resurgence

On 14 July, the European champions will be crowned in Berlin. No one really expects a former communist country to win in the city whose division once symbolised the cold war but perhaps, finally, 35 years after the Wall came down, the eastern part of the continent is beginning from a football perspective to regather its strength.

Not including Germany (two players in their provisional squad were born in the east), 11 of the 24 teams at the Euros will be from the former Soviet bloc, as opposed to eight in 2020 and 2016. Even including the two hosts, Poland and Ukraine, five of the 16 were from the east in 2012; there were five in 2008, 2004 and 1996 and four in 2000.

Individual countries have impressed at tournaments – the Czech Republic in 1996 and perhaps even more so in 2004, Russia in 2008, Croatia repeatedly – but this is the first time since the heyday of the Mitropa Cup that anywhere near half of the participants at any major finals have been from the Soviet bloc.

That may in part be to do with the expansion of the tournament to 24 teams – there are not many western European countries that did not make it. The Nations League essentially offers a short cut for a rising in-form side with a low coefficient, rather than having to slowly improve, advancing from seeding pot to seeding pot before getting a manageable draw.

That has favoured smaller countries (but not absolute minnows) who have a footballing heritage, often as part of a larger entity, but without the population to be successful consistently. For North Macedonia last time, read Georgia this.

Whatever the impact of changes in the competition format, an increase of more than a third on four years ago is not insignificant. But even to speak of the post-communist sides as one bloc these days feels anachronistic. If the situation in Poland or Romania ever had much in common with the situation in Slovenia or Ukraine, which is debatable, they do not now.

After 1989, the state-run academies that had once produced players lost their funding. The Romania and the Bulgaria of 1994, the Croatia of 1996 and 1998, even the Dynamo Kyiv team that reached the Champions League semi-final in 1999, were a hangover of those state institutions, based around the last players to receive that state training. After that came the dearth. But now sides from the east are, slowly, unsurely, beginning to emerge again.

Hungary's rise has perhaps been the most dramatic, if only because they were coming from the lowest base. The extended golden age when they reached World Cup finals in 1938 and 1954 had long since collapsed, undermined by the attacks on the two great well-springs of the culture that had produced it: the far-right government shut down MTK Budapest in 1940 because it was perceived as a Jewish club and the communists deliberately downgraded Ferencvaros because they were seen as the team of the ethnically German working classes.

**The rise of Hungary and, to a lesser extent, Serbia and Georgia, feels sustainable**

When Ferenc Puskas, Sandor Kocsis and Zoltan Czibor, plus the entire under-21 squad, defected as a result of the brutal Soviet repression of the Uprising in 1956, there was nothing to replace it.

Largely through tax breaks, the autocratic prime minister, Víktor Orban, has encouraged investment in football while establishing an academy in his home village of Felcsut. Since his return to power, in 2010, more than 40 stadiums have been constructed or renovated, including the 65,000-capacity Puskas Arena that will host the Champions League final in 2026, while 1,590 new pitches have been laid and 2,800 others refurbished.

The result has been a distinct upturn. In 2016, Hungary reached their first major tournament in 30 years and have qualified for both Euros since, while their league has risen from 32nd to 24th in the Uefa rankings.

The picture in Serbia is similar, if not so dramatic. The big two Belgrade clubs, Red Star and Partizan, have received state backing in recent years. Red Star have further benefited from a lucrative sponsorship deal with Gazprom and both have focused on their academies.

The result is that in 2021 the CIES football observatory ranked Serbia sixth globally for player production, although they have fallen slightly since. Serbia's league, though, is ranked 19th by Uefa; theirs is still largely an export economy.

Georgia will be the lowest-ranked side in Germany and even if they finished their qualifying group behind Spain, Scotland and Norway, their progress via the Nations League should not be regarded as the equivalent of winning a raffle.

As part of a general focus on youth development, Georgia has hosted Uefa under-19 and under-21 tournaments in the past seven years. The number of male players playing the game has increased by a factor of 2.5 in that time (and the number of female players by a factor of 10) as investment, some of it from Uefa grants, has improved facilities. That the Georgian league ranks 46th of 55 in Europe, which suggests there is some way to go.

If the rise of Hungary and, to a lesser extent, Serbia and Georgia, feels sustainable, based on solid foundations, Albania's does not. They won one of 11 games in 2022, but have been inspired by their coach, the former Arsenal full-back Sylvinho, who promoted a string of previously unheralded players and produced an eight-game unbeaten run to finish top of their qualifying group.

Their league is ranked 47th. Sometimes teams simply come together and that perhaps indicates the wider point. The greatest testament to how far the post-communist bloc has moved on is, while they may all have been facing a similar problem 30 years ago, how their cases feel remarkably varied.

The old model of state control has gone and while forms of state investment has returned in some areas, new ways of funding development have been found. Not all will endure. But as the shadow of Soviet control retreats further into the past, the most striking aspect of the 11 post-communist qualifiers is how little they have in common.



MATTIA OZBOT/UEFA VIA GETTY IMAGES



*Ylber Ramadani and Albania are appearing in their second Euro finals while Georgia and star man Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (below) will be making their European Championship debut*

# IS THE UK READY FOR SLAVE PLAY?

*Jeremy O Harris's provocative drama electrified Broadway. As it comes to London, we speak to the writer and his new stars, Kit Harington and Olivia Washington*



The Observer
09 | 06 | 24
the new review

# Agenda

*The finest writing every Sunday for arts, science, politics and ideas*


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## Agenda 2-7

- **On my radar** Smashing Pumpkins frontman Billy Corgan on his cultural highlights
- **Q&A** Actor Lia Williams
- **The grid** The Cypriot beach resort turned ghost town
- **AL Kennedy**

## Features 8-21

- **Cover story** Jeremy O Harris talks to Claire Armitstead about his controversial hit *Slave Play*
- **Sport** Dutch hurdler Femke Bol is set to be the face of the Paris Olympics
- **Interview** *Today* presenter Mishal Husain talks to Rachel Cooke about her new memoir
- **Ukraine** Writer turned soldier Oleksandr Mykhed's powerful account of the past two years

## Science & Tech 22-25

- **Cosmology** What shape is the universe? Philip Ball reports
- **Q&A** American atmospheric chemist Susan Solomon on why she doesn't share the pessimism of most climate scientists. By Killian Fox
- **John Naughton** If you're happy to be hacked, carry on using QR codes...

## Critics 26-37

- **Wendy Ide** reviews Viggo Mortensen's western *The Dead Don't Hurt*
- **Kitty Empire** on Liam Gallagher live in Cardiff
- **Laura Cumming** sees Nan Goldin at the Welsh Chapel
- **Rowan Moore** on this year's Serpentine pavillion

## Books 38-45

- **Dorian Lynskey** on Hip-Hop Is History by Questlove
- **Anthony Cummins** on *Scaffolding* by Lauren Elkin
- **The books interview** Novelist Lorrie Moore
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## Puzzles & TV 46-56

- Everyman crossword, sudoku, Azed crossword, chess, guess the painting and more – p46-47
- The week's television and radio highlights – p48-49
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## Feedback

**Last week, Blondie co-founder Chris Stein talked to Tim Lewis about Debbie Harry, Bowie and 50 years in rock'n'roll. Here's how readers responded online:**

There's so much to say, but I'll focus on this: I was 12 when Heart of Glass was being played on the radio. It sounded like nothing any of us had ever heard before, or since. It sounded like you were listening to something from the future. eamonmcc

Great band. Seriously underrated. The press fixated on Harry's look, often failing to recognise what a great singer and fantastic performer she was. The lyrics they wrote together are modern classics, clearly sung and instantly understood by audiences. The introduction of French lyrics to some hits was done seamlessly and effectively. It just seemed effortless and natural. Libertatem

Massive claim to fame moment: I had a drink with Chris Stein and [drummer] Clem Burke at the fabled Met Bar post-show. I didn't get to meet Debbie Harry but I did get her the bottle of Absolut Vodka she wouldn't go on without. At the end of their 45-minute set it was empty! TopLeft

Rock'n'roll takes so many people at such a young age that it's always nice to see an artist celebrating 50 years in the business. I have many favourite Blondie songs, but I will always remember Blondie hitting No 1 in the UK with Maria in 1999, more than 15 years after their supposed heyday. That made me very happy. Whovian79



# The big picture

*A trip to Budapest in 1975 provided a portal to an alternative world for the Dutch photographer Bertien van Manen, who died last month*

*ON THE COVER Kit Harington, Jeremy O Harris and Olivia Washington photographed by Suki Dhanda for the Observer New Review.*



*Budapest Station, 1975 by Bertien van Manen.*

There is a fairytale quality to Bertien van Manen's 1975 photograph of the arrivals hall at Budapest Keleti train station. Among the questions it demands is: who are the two women in shawls and where might they be going? (And then there is the slight double take required to be sure that the pointing woman's arm is not somehow on both sides of the right-hand shawl-wearer's head.)

The otherworldly atmosphere of the photograph was appropriate to Van Manen's quest. Her journey to Budapest marked a sliding doors moment in her career. Up until then, the photographer, who died last month aged 89, had a successful career in Amsterdam working for fashion magazines. But then she started looking hard at the pictures in Robert Frank's landmark odyssey, *The Americans*. She felt the need to be on the road, in curious places. She was 40, her children were growing up, so she took a trip to Budapest, then almost as inaccessible as Narnia.

Her photographs from that journey have hardly been seen before, and are about to be published in a new monograph. They convey the freedom Van Manen appeared to feel from finding time just to look, without any commercial imperative. She dwelt on the ways that time appeared to have a different quality in this alternative world. People move without much urgency; you can almost hear clocks ticking.

After Budapest, Van Manen never really looked back. She travelled extensively in the former Soviet Union, and Appalachia, embedding herself in the life of communities unlike her own. She planned to call the series from Hungary "I Will Be Wolf", a line borrowed from the Budapest-born poet Attila József; the quote sounds like a remembered statement of intent. Having let the world come to her, for the first half of her life, the photographer would now be on the prowl, in search of it.
**Tim Adams**

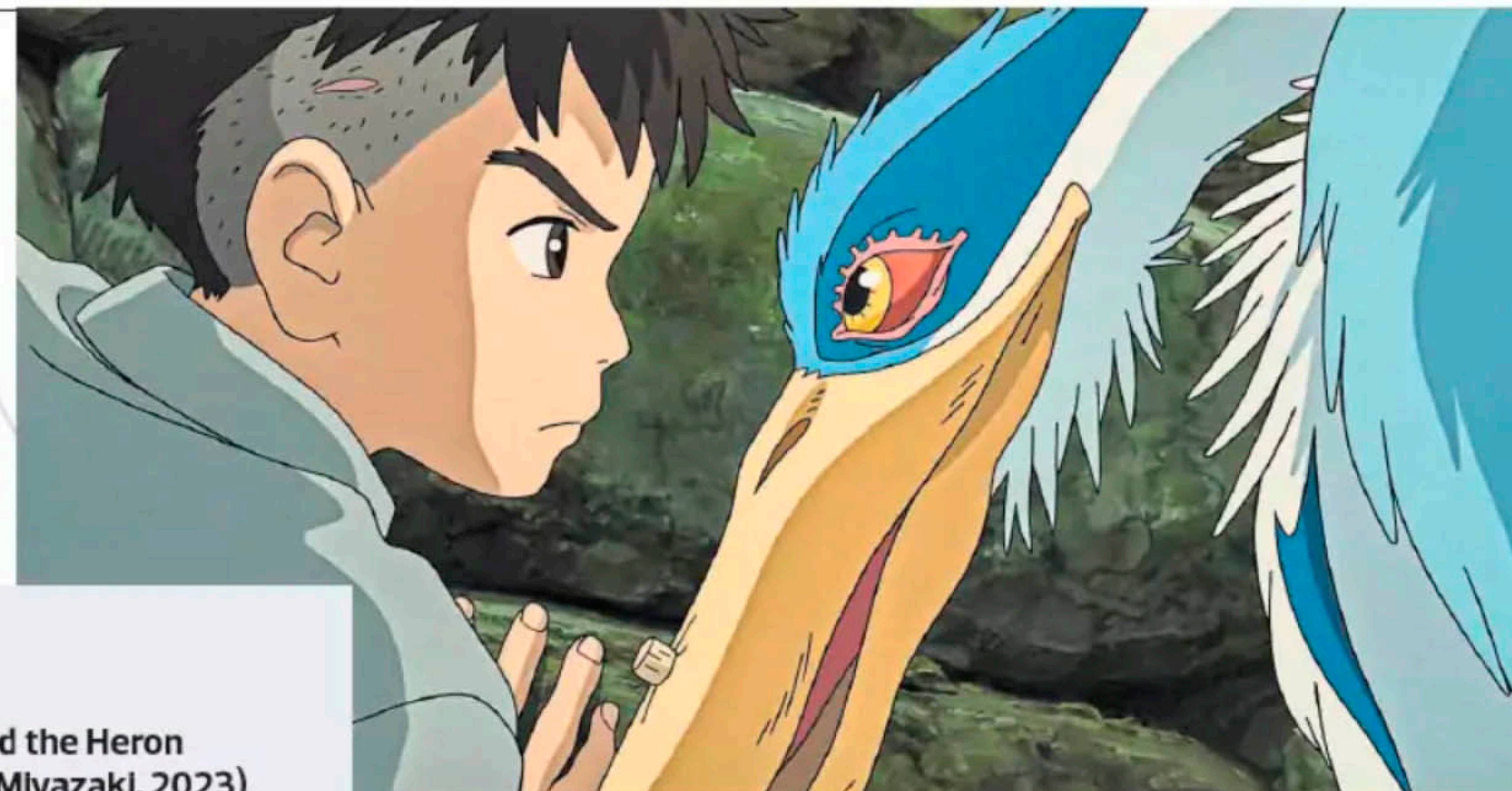
*I Will Be Wolf by Bertien van Manen is published by Mack (£25)*

# ON MY RADAR

## BILLY CORGAN



**Born in Chicago in 1967, Billy Corgan is the frontman of the Smashing Pumpkins. The band have released 12 studio albums; he has also released music solo and with the supergroup Zwan. He owns the National Wrestling Alliance, and is the subject of US reality TV series *Billy Corgan's Adventures in Carnyland*. Along with his wife, Chloe Mendel, he runs Madame Zuzu's Tea House in Highland Park, Illinois. The Smashing Pumpkins are on the UK leg of their The World is a Vampire tour until 14 June.**
Kathryn Bromwich



### Film

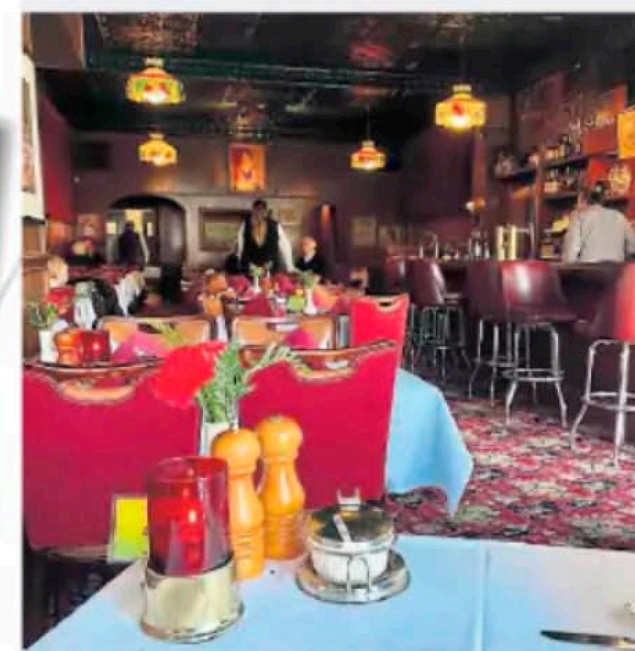
**The Boy and the Heron (dir Hayao Miyazaki, 2023)**
I went with my son, who's eight, to the local arthouse. It's about a boy who loses his mother quite young, which certainly touched me because, in a way, I lost my mother when I was four, when she was institutionalised. It's a beautifully animated movie, but a bit cryptic. As we were leaving I asked my son to explain it to me. He went: "Well, it was about a boy and a blue heron." Sometimes it takes a child to tell you that the truth is right in front of you. It was a beautiful moment between my son and I.

### Concert

**Mozart's Requiem, Lyric Opera of Chicago**
I recently saw a performance of this with Enrique Mazzola [below] as the conductor. It was probably 60 people in the choir, 60 musicians on stage and another four soloists upfront singing. Of course, I'd heard Requiem on recording, but seeing it live with a world-class orchestra was almost like a religious experience. When you're standing in front of one of the all-time greats, listening to seven different melodies and polyphony – it's a level of genius I can't even contemplate, much less emulate.

### Restaurant

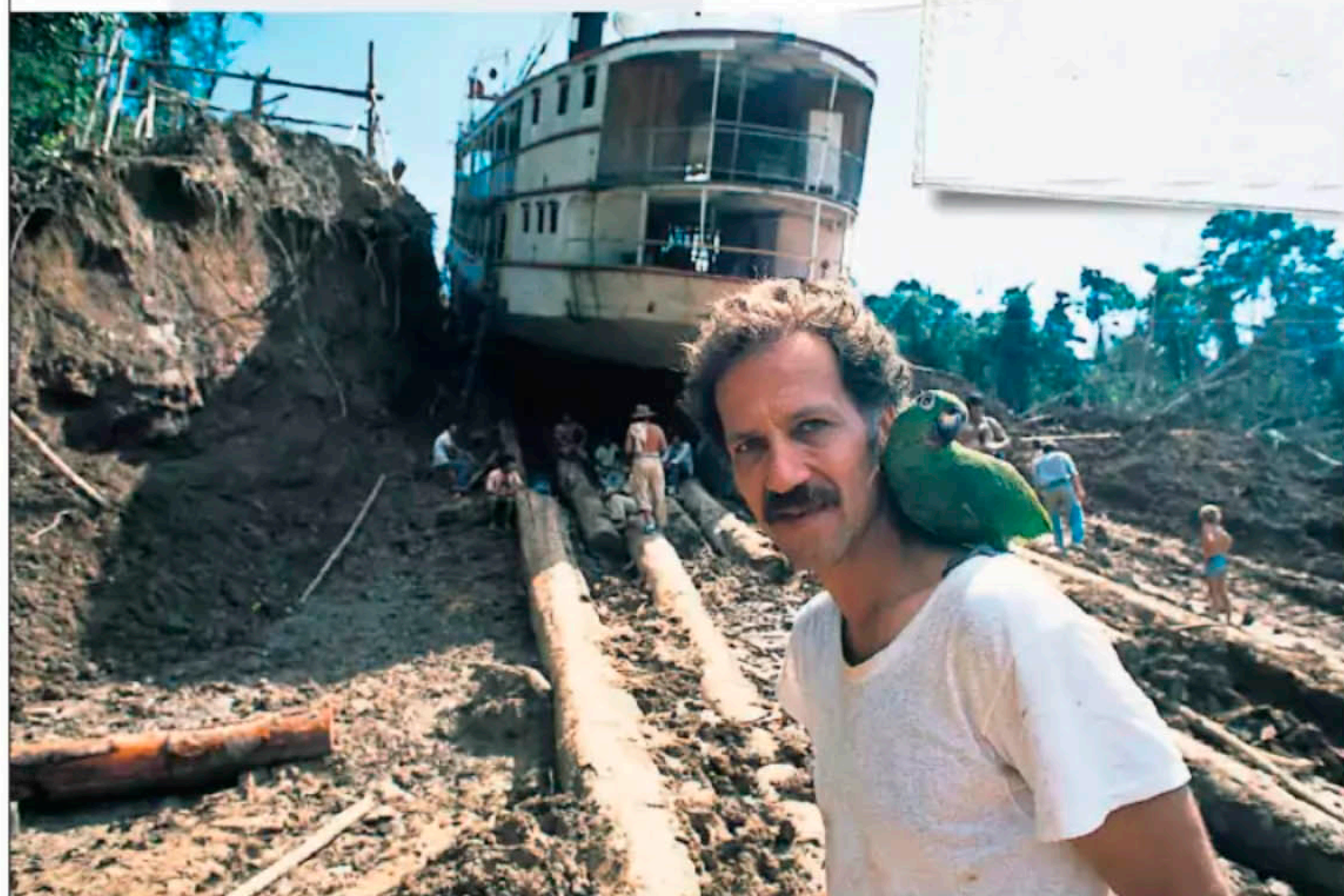
**Del Rio, Highwood, Illinois**
There's an Italian restaurant here where I live. It was originally a tango bar, where servicemen would go dancing in the 30s. It's been in the same family for almost 100 years. It has all the original decor: a vintage tin ceiling, a deco bar. There's stuff pasted on the wall that's probably been there for 80 years. It's a true relic that has somehow survived: the perfect meeting of past and present. Unfortunately, even though I'm a consistent customer, there's only one thing I can eat there, which is the gluten-free pasta.





### Book

**Every Man for Himself and God Against All by Werner Herzog**
I enjoyed Werner Herzog's memoir. His style is very laconic: he talks about almost losing his life multiple times in such a calm, German way that it's almost shocking. I guess that's in his film-making as well. There's a story where he's in a helicopter, shooting a movie on one of the most dangerous mountains in the world, and within minutes they're in a full-blown whiteout snowstorm where you can't even see your hand in front of your face. They were trapped up there for days and almost died.



### Song

**Kid Tigrrr – Skin**
Kid Tigrrr is an independent artist I'm fond of, and she recently put out a song called Skin. Her music is kind of shoegazy: if you're a fan of, say, My Bloody Valentine or Slowdive, it would be in that genre. She performs a lot on her own, which is very brave, just her and a guitar. I've never seen her live, but she posts clips all the time on Instagram, so I feel like I have. I've written to her to encourage her to follow her own muse.

### Collection

**The Bozeum**
Fans of *The Simpsons*, of course, know Krusty the Clown, who was based on Bozo the Clown, the most famous of which was in Chicago. Recently I was invited by the actor David Arquette, who now owns the Bozo franchise, to go see a guy who's the biggest Bozo collector in the world [Tom Holbrook]. I got a private tour of his Bozeum, which was pretty cool. Because it was such a merchandising cash cow, you can imagine what they could sell to kids: toys, dolls, soap, toothbrushes – anything a child would want, they put Bozo's name on it.



# Here's to a green and independent 5 July

## AL Kennedy



Well, I'm back on the ferry, heading to the UK, wondering if the North Sea undulations are making me feel unhinged or the prospect of being much nearer to our general election. Mexico gets a progressive, PhD-qualified climate crisis expert. Even Narendra Modi's far-right populism gets dented. We currently have a disaster capitalist hydrocarbon extraction enthusiast wearing the wrong trousers. He will most likely be succeeded by a man whose sentences flee meaning the way vampires dodge tanning salons. Seriously, if our last decade in politics (and all preceding decades) have taught us nothing else, we know that when someone is incapable of using words to describe their ideas, then they either have no ideas, or only ideas too terrible to mention.

Viewed mostly from France, the whole spectacle has seemed relatively harmless – like watching an amateur re-enactment of *Gormenghast* by people with recent head injuries, who are also on ketamine. And, somehow, also on crack. A dismaying percentage of those involved are clearly high on pure, uncut racism with no plans for ever coming down. And that goes for their bots and trolls and Putin-backed Astroturfers. Voter suppression disguised as a valiant effort to stop "illegals" voting? Way to go! You can be racist all day long with that. And voter fraud is a problem we don't have – so it's solved already! Immigration a net financial benefit, source of workers and resilience in communities? Well, those are just facts and we've been ignoring them for years!

Rishi "mouse ears" Sunak has tried to appear pathetic during most public engagements, but gaining sympathy votes will be tough. His party's blend of imbecility and sadism has wounded so many – and his natural base has been conditioned to view both empathy and sympathy as an existential threat.

Those Conservatives who haven't quit before we fire them face electoral evaporation, or betting on survival as *checks notes* Labour MPs. Well, that sounds perfectly normal. Whichever Edwardian brigadier fell out of the cryochamber at CCHQ and suggested bringing back national service hasn't helped. The generation facing the fake threat of fake serving their nation (*cost benefit analysis – what's that?*) know their nation has enthusiastically failed to serve them since birth. Removing almost every support and opportunity earlier generations took for granted, gaslighting and weird avocado shaming does not inspire a joyous citizen army. This week, I expect a desperate Rishi will roll out "Birching for Britain" and overfly the D-day beaches suspended beneath a Lancaster bomber and wearing Lady Diana's shoes. Which also won't work. But he can console himself with thoughts of fresh American adventures like crashing the dollar, or privatising oxygen in Texas.

Meanwhile, the Labour ... Ohdearlord. Well, the part of it that wasn't the Tory party last week is a) resigning b) finding they've been purged c) wondering where all their lefty door-knockers and activists went and d) being parachuted into undelighted constituencies, armed only with unshakeable faith in their own genius and a Ouija board to check in with Margaret Thatcher's shrieking wraith. Some voters are distinctly queasy about handing Keir Starmer the kind of majority that let Tony Blair champion wizard wheezes like forever wars, black-site torture chambers and corrosive public-private partnerships. One look at Wes Streeting's glistening enthusiasm for private healthcare and Bill Beveridge would be stamping on his hat – and his report.

A hung parliament may loom. And that may mean government by consensus, maybe even cost-benefit analysis – everything the Westminster edgelord blunderdome abhors as boring and contaminated by expertise. But, like getting checked for lumps, or fitting supporting beams in a school – and a plethora of other important human activities – politics is *meant* to be boring and require expertise.

This may be the GE when we sidestep our media and political classes' reverence for two-horse races, intergenerational party loyalty and established networks of political influence. We're up against FPTP, gerrymandering, campaign finance chicanery, data harvesting and influence ops, strawman candidates and voter suppression. But several byelections have already shown UK voters are perfectly able to research and deploy tactical votes. Even if televised leader debates are shrinking the national IQ every time they happen, August 2024 still looks as if it may be Greener and more Independent.

But beyond the blunderdome, even if every MP selected is a paragon, free of influence from foreign powers, we'll need years to rebuild. Brexit devastation continues and the majority of our politicians will neither lead on it nor mention it. Our pain won't stop, neither will the wannabe führers weaponising it. The carefully groomed and perma-furious legions eager to "reclaim London" by pissing all over it won't go away. They will grow angrier and more extreme if the UK starts leaving them behind.

Our thinking, our spirit, has been harmed. We have all been nudged and bullied towards everyday cruelties, worn down by resisting them, desensitised by every day's tide of new misery. Very many people have remained very decent, but this election is already kicking the Overton window right off the side of our house, with more performative cruelty, more thinking the unthinkable.

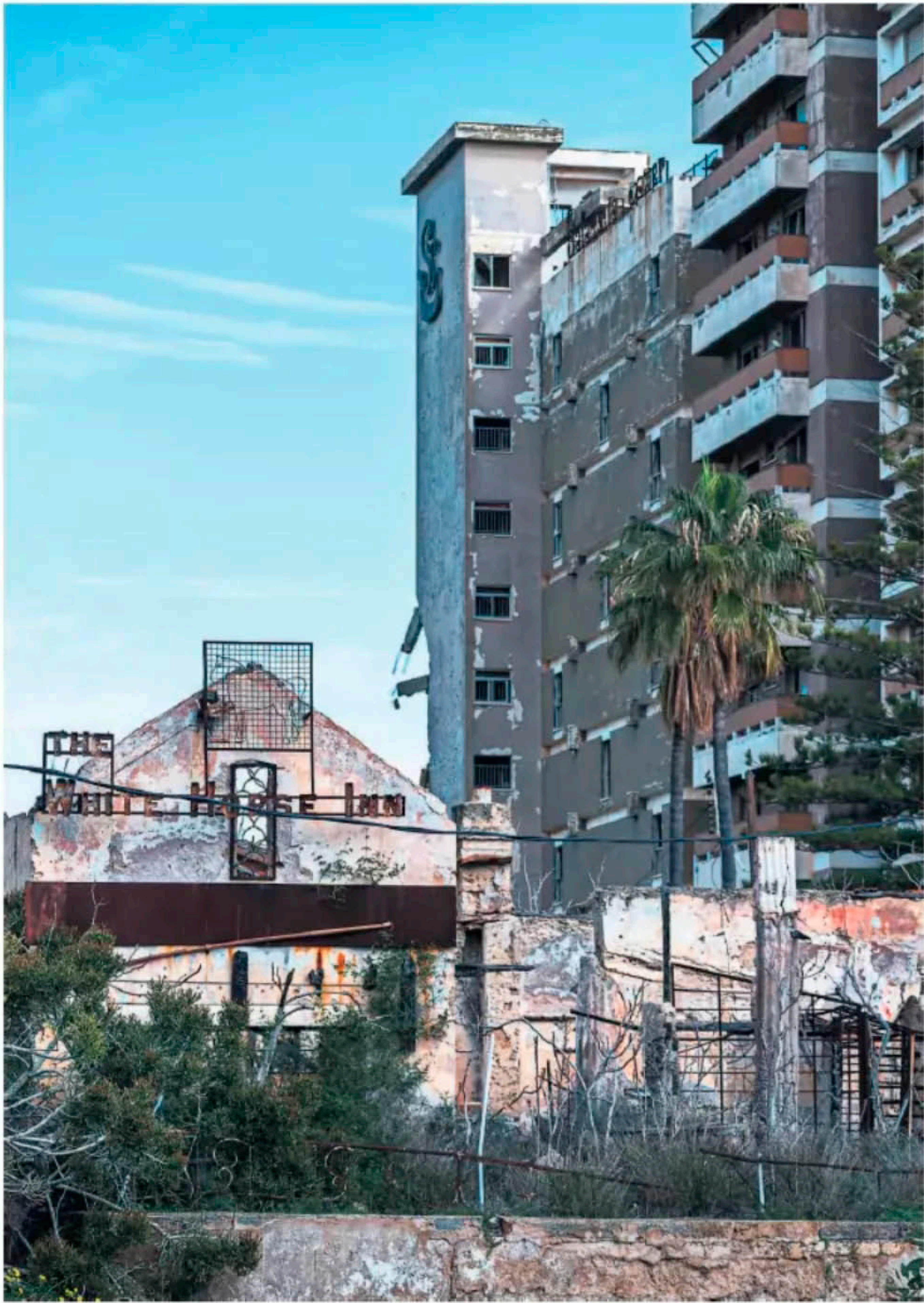
There may be a joyful evening ahead as the freshly unseated mumble on livestreams, watching us take their power. Seeing the mighty humbled by local firebrands, eye-rolls, milkshakes and witty bins is fun. But the far right, the dark money and online influence aren't going anywhere. Racism and bigotry have been used to splinter democracy. If it loses traction, the risk of violence rises. Proxy wars, espionage, gangsterism, chaos profiteering, rogue governments and lost boys roil around us. Capitalism's dark circus will destroy our world, unless we vote, vote, vote for people who will lead and defend us, then hold them to account.

The fifth of July could be a good day. But from 6 July onwards, stay frosty, stay hopeful, get more engaged. The fight has barely begun.

*We have all been nudged and bullied towards everyday cruelties, worn down by resisting them*



Illustration by *David Foldvari*







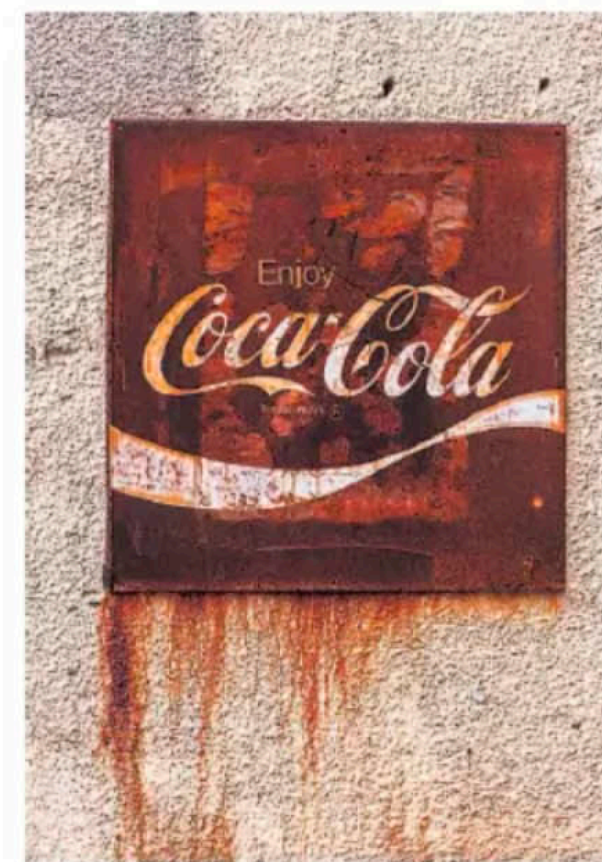


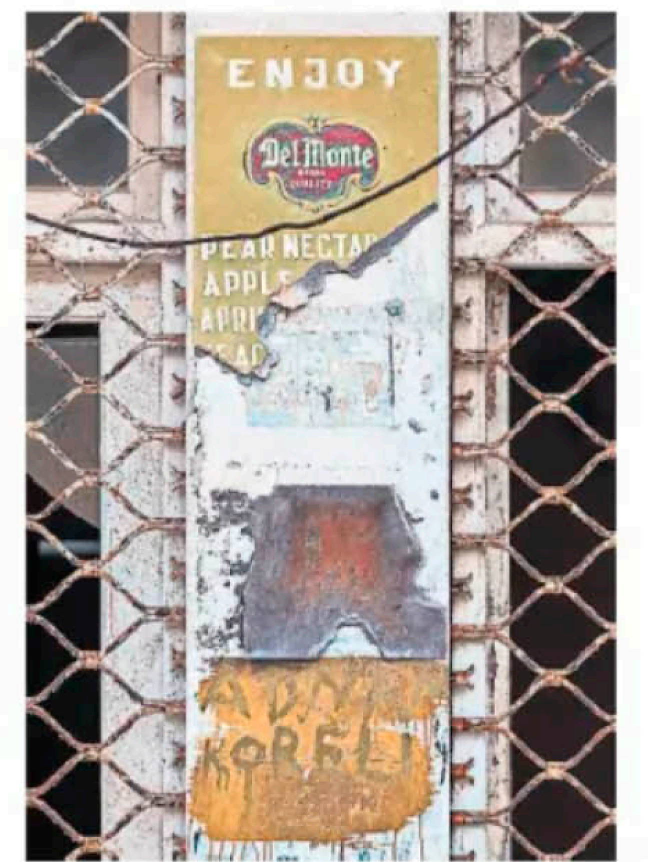
# The grid

*Glamour to ghost town: the fate of one Cypriot beach resort*

Once a glamorous beach resort that attracted the likes of Elizabeth Taylor and Abba, the Cypriot town of Varosha was abandoned on 14 August 1974 when Turkey invaded. For 50 years the town has been deserted, but in 2020 it was opened up to tourists. British-Cypriot writer and editor Alex Christofi and his father were some of the first people to be granted admission, while Alex was researching his new book on the history of Cyprus. "I felt quite dissociated as it was difficult to process what I was seeing," he says. "There was almost no one else there. With the rope barriers, it felt as if I were touring the set of a film about a disaster that had wiped out humanity. There is something deeply melancholy about what remains."
**Kathryn Bromwich**

*Cypria: A Journey to the Heart of the Mediterranean (Bloomsbury Continuum, £20) is out now*







## The Simone Lia cartoon















# Q AND A

## Lia Williams
*Actor, 59*

*The actor on starring in a new play about sexual harassment, her portrayal of the Post Office's Paula Vennells, and the playwright closest to her heart*



Lia Williams is an exceptional actor of questing intelligence and warmth whose award-winning performances on stage and screen have a way of staying in the mind. Her 1993 interpretation of a student accusing her professor of harassment, in David Mamet's *Oleanna*, was one such role. Now, 30 years on, she is about to play a professor, in *Alma Mater* at the Almeida by Kendall Feaver, a tremendous new play that returns to the subject of sexual misconduct.

**It seems you've always been drawn to political drama.**
I've worked with Harold Pinter – who directed *Oleanna* – and he used to say, about his own work, that he was never consciously political yet a political strain ran through everything he wrote. I'm now beginning to wonder – I've been doing this job for 40 years – if there might be something similar in me. While not overtly political – I'm an idealist and eclectic in my tastes – I keep getting drawn to new writing that discusses complex issues but also has heart.

**You play the first female master of a college, Jo Mulligan – an unsettling mix of enlightened and unreconstructed. Has the subject of how we approach sexual misconduct changed?**
Not a great deal has changed, yet everything has changed. *Oleanna* was a polemic and loaded. *Alma Mater* isn't. It has brilliantly clear arguments from different characters. Jo Mulligan is a second- or third-wave feminist who fought for equal rights pitched against Nikki, a young student. Fourth-wave feminism has gone online and exploded. But we're challenged nowadays by groupthink. It's cool to be feminist while, in Jo's day, it was often seen as wacky. Jo wants to encourage her students to consider the things she has discovered for herself such as to think outside the box and be responsible for your own actions.

**Being responsible – or failing to be – reminds me of how extraordinary you were as Paula Vennells in the ITV drama *Mr Bates vs the Post Office* – that mirthless professional smile of yours a little masterpiece – did you make a close study of Vennells?**
I couldn't. Vennells, as we all know, was impossible to find: she just disappeared. There was that one shot of her on a bicycle in a churchyard but she was so protected by lawyers that ITV and the writer couldn't get near her. The most interesting thing for me was that the writer was not allowed to invent a single word for that particular role so everything I spoke was transcript. We had to make the printed word sound as if it was coming from my mouth, otherwise the lawyers would have sued.

**What did you think of her testimony to the Horizon inquiry – and did you support the pressure on her to surrender her CBE?**
I never like witch-hunts but she has to be accountable. It's absolutely crucial. I made a choice not to play her as evil because I thought it important the audience make the decision. That's how I approach my work generally. During the hearing, her tears seemed to indicate she was genuinely sorry, but being sorry is not the same as taking responsibility – and my reading is that she's not emotionally capable of handling the depth of that responsibility. I think she's more shallow than malicious. She created her own set of truths and believed them.

*'I think Paula Vennells is more shallow than malicious. She created her own set of truths'*

**Has your experience of directing in the theatre changed your sense of what it is to be an actor?**
When you act in a play, you are a certain colour on the canvas. When you direct, you see the whole painting. I see myself as two different people. I'm more raw and vulnerable as an actor. When I direct, I've a stronger grip on what I'm doing as well as on who I am. When you're acting you have to lose who you are, lose your footing.

**And speaking of footings, I read that your actor son, Joshua James, has been teaching you rock climbing. How did that pan out?**
Rock climbing isn't my thing, we discovered.

**Not relaxing enough maybe – what *do* you do to relax?**
I love scuba diving. I spend an enormous amount of time with Angus Wright, my partner. We met doing the *Oresteia* here at the Almeida [he played Agamemnon to her Clytemnestra]. The Almeida is my favourite theatre. We took the show to New York after Covid but I ruptured my achilles on the second day of the tech [technical rehearsal]. An absolute disaster. It felt like a psychic amputation because I had the character raging in me… I spent 80 days on a sofa while Angus had to carry on with the show.

**How is your heel now?**
Completely mended. I had surgery over there.

**Are you still a patron of Clean Break (sorry about the name in the context of your heel) and what can therapeutic theatre do in practice?**
It gives women who have experienced the criminal justice system a safe space to express their stories. It is a huge catharsis for women who feel on the outside of society that builds confidence and the sense of belonging – it's a wonderful organisation.

**Which playwright is closest to your heart?**
Tennessee Williams. He is a real poet but I also love Mamet and Pinter. I'm so lucky to have worked with writers who are masters of their art.

**You're nudging 60 – how does that feel?**
I don't mind being old. For a woman, it can be amazing. I think a lot of older women have so much beauty. I've never needed to be entirely visible, though I certainly don't feel invisible now. I've not chosen to be boldly in the limelight and have loved a career where I can step into a role on a stage and then just disappear quietly after it – it's my greatest pleasure.

**Interview by Kate Kellaway**

*Alma Mater runs at the Almeida, London N1 from Tuesday to 20 July*

*Lia Williams photographed by Anselm Ebulue for the Observer New Review.*

# 'I LET MY BRAIN FOLLOW THINGS IT'S EXCITED BY'





*From left, Kit Harington, Olivia Washington and Jeremy O Harris.* Suki Dhanda/the Observer



*With the London opening of his controversial Broadway hit Slave Play set to be the theatre event of the year, dramatist Jeremy O Harris, together with two of its stars, Kit Harington and Olivia Washington, talk to Claire Armitstead*

It is week two of rehearsals for a production that promises to be one of the theatre events of the year – the London premiere of the American sensation *Slave Play* – and a fold-up metal chair is taking a battering. There is an ear-splitting clang as it is repeatedly flung to the floor in order to perfect a fraught scene involving a group therapy session for sexually dysfunctional couples. When the chair accidentally grazes the arm of one actor in the couple, the other – who threw it – becomes momentarily distraught. In swoops the woman who doubles as intimacy coordinator and fight director with calming words and instructions on how to keep the scene safe. This fleeting incident is a measure of how intense rehearsals are for a play that breaks racial and sexual taboos to an extent that is rare, if not unprecedented, in the commercial theatre.

The chair-throwing confrontation involves one of three interracial couples who have resorted to "antebellum sexual performance therapy" in an attempt to salvage sex lives that have been destroyed by the historical baggage of their differing skin colours. This therapy consists of enacting extreme plantation-era fantasies and then deconstructing them. For Dustin and Gary (played respectively by one of five Tony-nominated actors from the Broadway production,

**Continued overleaf**

Continued from page 9

James Cusati-Moyer, and the new British recruit Fisayo Akinade), the fantasy explodes from a fight to rough sex between a white indentured servant and his black enslaved overseer. When I visit, the actors are rehearsing the deconstruction scene.

"I'm not white. I can't be white," insists Dustin, who has just performed the servant. "You always say you're not white but what are you?" thunders Gary. "You just get to exist in this ambiguity of 'nonwhiteness'... I'm black black black, blue black, jet black, raisin black, eerie black. People have seen so much colour in me they could make a new rainbow with the shade, but they always go back to black." As the stage directions make clear: "This is a play about shades, colours, as much as it's about race." The directions also state that it is intended to be "a comedy of sorts, and should be played as such".

Among those watching the scene unfold in the south London rehearsal room is the play's 35-year-old author, Jeremy O Harris, who wrote the initial draft of the play in his first year as a graduate student at Yale school of drama. Though he is now also an actor and a producer, with six projects of various kinds on the go (and Rihanna on speed dial), it is *Slave Play* that has caught the wind. So far it has sailed an eight-year course, from student readings to an off-Broadway production and on to Broadway itself, where it picked up what at the time in 2020 was a record 12 Tony nominations. Though it didn't win any of them, it had become a social phenomenon that reached far beyond typical well-heeled audiences. An HBO documentary, *Slave Play. Not a Movie. A Play*, about this journey, directed by Harris himself, will have its premiere at New York's Tribeca film festival tomorrow.

In a nod to the controversy the play has attracted along the way, the film opens with a furious intervention by a woman at a Q&A after a performance, about discrimination against poor white mothers. Though the Broadway run attracted little flak, its early days were a different story. Death threats were made against members of the cast. The hashtag #ShutDownSlavePlay was set up and a petition circulated calling for the drama to be halted.

News that *Slave Play* was coming to the UK was initially overshadowed by a row about plans to hold two "black out" nights during its 13-week run. Black Out nights – designed to allow people of colour to watch the play "free from the white gaze" – have been happening in the US since 2019, arriving in London in 2022 with Harris's acclaimed play *Daddy* at the Almeida theatre. But despite assurances that no one had yet been turned away, Downing Street waded in with a tin-eared warning that "clearly, restricting audiences on the basis of race would be wrong and divisive".

Harris responded with characteristic ebullience. "Hey 10 Downing Street and Rishi Sunak," he tweeted on X, "... there's literally a war going on ... maybe the death of thousands of Palestinian children should be more 'concerning' than a playwright attempting to make the West End more inclusive to those who aren't historically invited there." It has since been announced that 30 pay-what-you can tickets will be released every Wednesday in a drive to encourage anyone who is unable to afford West End prices.

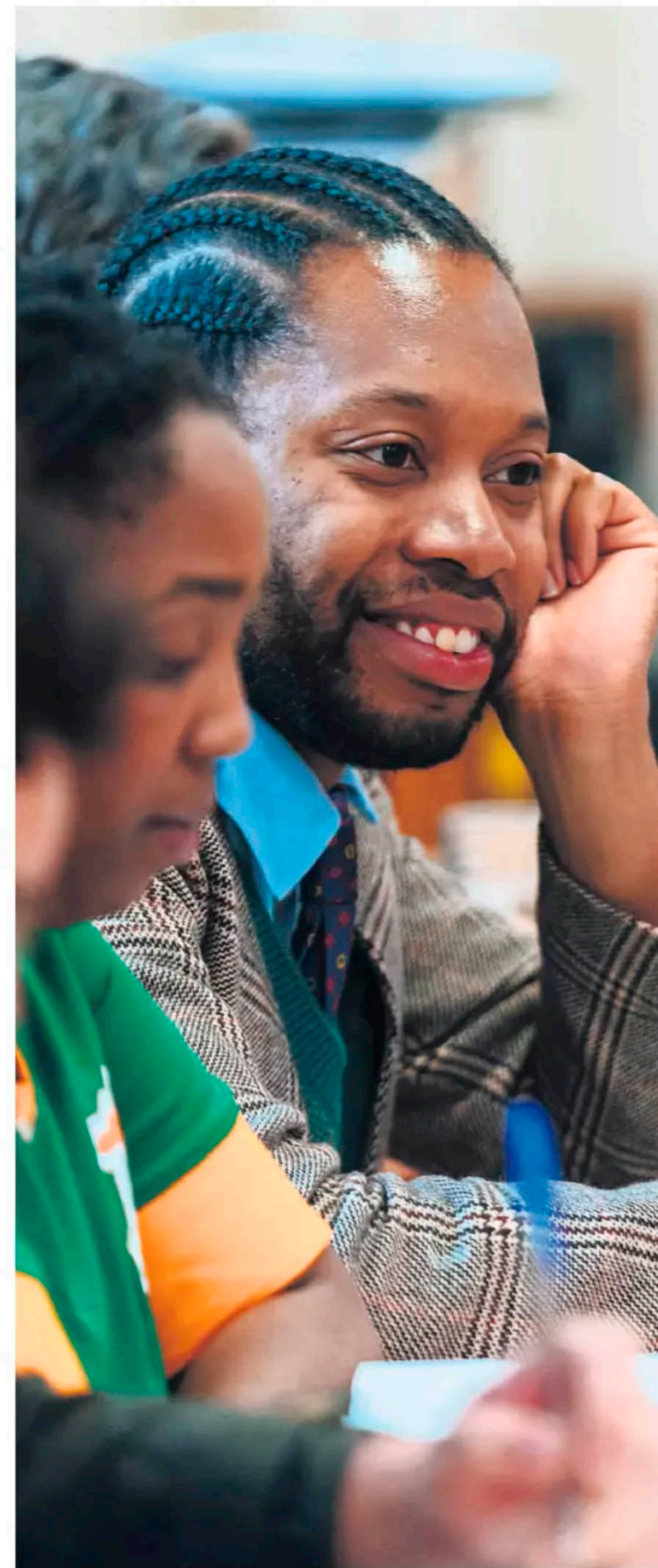
In person, Harris is a 6ft 5in ball of energy, foppishly dressed in a tweed jacket, retro tank top and tie, who bounces between sitting down to be interviewed and striding around the room taking video calls, with a cup of iced coffee in one hand and his phone in the other. At one point his multitasking surreally merges into one as he pauses to take a slurp of his coffee, while holding his mobile out to introduce me to a group of people he is talking into supporting a play he's producing by an old college friend.

Most of the controversy over *Slave Play* has been generated by people who haven't seen it, he insists, before admitting that it actually goes right back to its earliest days, when a female faculty adviser at Yale took strong exception to his portrayal of a young black woman, Kaneisha, who finds resolution through a challenging submission fantasy. "I feel like if that person, and a lot of the faculty at Yale, had had their way, I would have had a mental breakdown and this play would never have existed. I felt really under attack with it," he says. "That person said: 'You're making one of the most misogynistic choices I've ever seen made. This is a vile, vile thing to do and, by the way, other people think so too but are too afraid to tell you.' And it was this weird moment where I'm the student who's being told I have all this power and I'm so scary. And the last thing I wanted to do with a play was hurt people."

Harris, who exorcised the trauma in a scatological experimental play, *Yell: A Documentary of My Time Here*, clearly knows his theatre history. He cites Caryl Churchill, Sarah Kane and Debbie Tucker Green among his role models, and there are clear echoes, in the first two of *Slave Play's* three acts, of Churchill's feminist classic *Top Girls*, which similarly follows a comedic historical cosplay with a modern-day political deconstruction. "I wanted to work within a tradition that excited me, that asked daring, complex questions," he says, while pointing out his research is not done through books, but through the various tabs he has open at all times on his computer when he's working.







*ABOVE* ***Top, Kit Harington, Fisayo Akinade and James Cusati-Moyer in rehearsals. Above, Olivia Washington and Harington.*** *Helen Murray*

"I let my brain follow things it's excited by."

Fortunately, the play also immediately began to gather supporters, including the actors Chalia La Tour and Irene Sofia Lucio, who have played the roles of the two therapists since the very first readings. Director Robert O'Hara was one of Harris's professors at Yale when he was sent the script for consideration out of the blue. O'Hara recalls reading through it with his husband in bed. "My first reaction was, like: 'Why am I always the person that they send the outrageous crazy shit to?' And then I got to the end of the first act. And I said:'Oh, I know why' – because the second act was a deconstruction of everything I had just read. It did exactly what it was trying to do, which impressed me a lot."

O'Hara was clear from the off that the play needed an intimacy coordinator to help with its explicit enactments of sex and subjugation. So he got in touch with Claire Warden, who credits the play with introducing her role to the New York theatre as a proper job. She read the script on a bus. "I remember thinking, first: 'How the hell are we going to do this?' And, second: 'We *have* to do this,'" she says. "When I spoke to Robert, he said: 'I don't want you coming in here and making everybody comfortable, because it's an uncomfortable play.' But that's not what intimacy coordination is about: it's about making actors feel they can commit to it bravely and frankly, and tell these powerful stories without damaging themselves as human beings."

> *I remember thinking, first: 'How are we going to do this?' And, second: 'We have to do this'*

In the first workshops, says O'Hara: "We just thought it was a new play by a very exciting playwright. But when we started the [off-Broadway] presentation, there was a lot of anxiety from New York Theatre Workshop in terms of how should they have a conversation about it? How should they prepare their audiences? And I always said: 'If you're going to put the word "slave" on the side of a building, then you should not come in thinking that you're going to find comfort.' From the start, there was genuine interest, and not just in a new voice, but in the themes and the ideas inside the play." Madonna, Whoopi Goldberg, Scarlett Johansson and Stephen Sondheim were among the stars who went along to check it out.

But that was as far as O'Hara – or anyone involved – thought it would go. When he was approached about taking it to Broadway, he first thought the producers must be having him on and then that they were crazy. "It was a downtown theatre show," he says. "But when we got to Broadway, we realised that there was a space for this type of work that Broadway did not usually accommodate. There was space for boldness and a level of intrigue around race and sex in American and British history. And so it became a conversation that has grown in each iteration of it."

The *New York Times* agreed. In the

*LEFT
Harris at rehearsals.
Below, the cast
of the Broadway
production of Slave
Play: bottom, Claes
Bang and Terique
Jarrett in Harris's
hit play Daddy.
Matthew Murphy,
Marc Brenner*

> *When we learn about slavery at school we learn that it's an American thing. That's shocking*
> *Kit Harington*





run-up to the show, it ran a preview headlined: "Is Broadway ready for *Slave Play*?"; after it had closed, it followed up with an interview-based wrap-up titled: "Was Broadway ready for *Slave Play*?" It concluded that although the show hadn't recouped its costs, it had brought in 100,000 people to the 800-seat theatre over 19 weeks, so the answer had to be yes. It helped, says O'Hara, to have a writer who was happy to engage on social media and defend his play publicly against criticism, because that took the responsibility off the people in the rehearsal room: "Allowing the play to be the conversation and not thinking that you had to defend the play as you create it."

Among the couples looking on with rapt attention during Dustin and Gary's confrontation with the chair are Kaneisha and Jim, played by two of the new recruits to the cast for the West End run. Olivia Washington plays Kaneisha, the character who caused all the fuss back in the play's early days and who remains its most challenging character. She is a black American, married to a white British expat, whose plantation fantasy involves twerking for an overseer who brandishes a whip and forces her to eat a melon from the floor. Her husband, played by Kit Harington, is mortified by the role this forces on him.

No sooner was this new casting announced than a fresh controversy struck up about the deleterious impact of star casting in West End shows. Harington, who made his name as the charismatic Jon Snow in *Game of Thrones*, is contemptuous. "It's my sixth professional play, so it's not like I'm new to theatre," he says. "We're actors. We're just doing the play because we want to."

Washington, who is Hollywood royalty – the daughter of Denzel and Pauletta Washington – saw the play off-Broadway as a fairly new drama school graduate. "I just remember feeling that the experience was incomplete. I had no idea what the story was about. But after watching it, I immediately felt I have to read this, because I know I missed things. And I was right. I did miss things. I think what I love about Kaneisha is that she's very sure about the things that she wants for herself. And that that's not really dictated by what people around her think is a good idea. So I think it's just about having to be comfortable with not necessarily being a perfect idea of a young black woman today."

She has no qualms about her parents coming to see it, she says. "My family comes to everything that I do, so I think it would be weirder if they didn't come. Neither my mom nor my dad have done theatre in London, so I think they're very proud to see me in this space."

In these febrile times, when appropriation of any kind has become a red line, it may seem not only presumptuous but reckless for a man to reach so boldly into the sexual fantasies of women. But Harris is having none of it. "I think that as a queer man, there's a history in literature, from Tennessee Williams to Hanya Yanagihara, of queer men and odd women having a sort of a natural relationship. There is a marriage of these identities that I think means there can be some sublimation, and a sense that, through the act of writing, one can easily step inside a space that has certain psychic parallels. I'm a triple, a quadruple Gemini, so I'd say Kaneisha represents one of many parts of myself."

In some ways – because they're on the wrong side of both history and gender – *Slave Play* is hardest on its white male characters. The documentary shows actors struggling in rehearsal with even speaking some of the more taboo words. How does Harington feel he will cope with having to act out extreme domination scenes eight times a week? Though Jim is cast as the aggressor, the enactment comes from Keneisha's imagination, which makes him the fall guy of a bilious sort of comedy.

"What I'm already finding is, if you live with any character, you need to feel and empathise with them, and if they're repetitively the butt of a joke, it can get kind of painful in a strange way," says the actor. "He has his faults, obviously. But I love him, and I know he means well, and he's getting laughed at. I think that may be the point where it gets difficult."



n discussions early on in rehearsals, it became clear that slavery had not played as big a part in the history education of the British company members as it had for their American colleagues. "When we learned about slavery – at least when I was at school and I have to assume it's not changed much – we learn that it's an American thing that happened over there," says Harington. "We don't tend to learn about the British part in it, and I think that's kind of shocking." The risk, he adds, "is that a British audience may be titillated and shocked, but try to sit back from it and talk and think about it like it's an American play with American issues. And I think it's our challenge to try to not let them do that."

Though this is the first time Jim has been played by a British actor, his Britishness is an important part of the play, points out O'Hara. "Britain invented slavery. It is the birthplace of what became American slavery, you know, and this character has a disconnect. He's with a black woman who grew up in the south, who visited plantations, and he has absolutely no relationship to the history of slavery. So he's ended up with that black wife in a therapy session that is all about something that he has been in complete denial of, for his entire existence, and now he must confront it."

That, he concludes, is the blind spot the play is dealing with. "If you don't know where you came from, and what was here before you, then you will end up repeating it, and to your detriment."

In the eight years of the play's life, the world around it has changed; the energy and fury around Black Lives Matter and #MeToo have abated. How does Harris feel this has affected it? "I don't know that my world has changed at all," he replies. "The biggest thing that has changed for me as far as my social world is concerned is that I wrote this play before I had had a long-term relationship, and now I'm about to get married. That's a significant shift of worldview for me."

But then he changes tack, saying he conceived the play in the aftermath of the murder of Florida teenager Trayvon Martin in 2012. "As a black American, who grew up in the south, who also was witnessing the Black Lives Matter moment that came on the back of that, it was very funny to stage it in 2018 and 2019, and then bring it back to Broadway in 2021, post the George Floyd protests. People were like: 'Oh my god, it's so much deeper now. I get it more.' And I'm like: 'How?' I became confused by a notion that there was ever a moment when white supremacy was hidden from view, because it was never hidden from me. It felt very much a part of my social life, my work life and the life that I was seeing people live, even here, across the ocean."

Now that he has settled into his stride there is no stopping him. "Rishi Sunak is the first person of colour to be the prime minister. Right?" he declares. "I have French friends who tell me all the time: 'We don't have the same race problems you guys have in America.' But I'm like: 'There are so many brown people in your country who will never reach the height of your judiciary or your executive at all. And yet you tell me that there's not a race problem here?' There are so many women that aren't at the top of these places, and we think that we don't have a gender problem?

"So I think that, yes, the world has changed around the play, but I think the reason it is still able to garner audiences is because these questions are going to be around for a very long time. We've barely even got to the middle of unpacking the box of colonialism and racism."

He flips open one of the many tabs on his phone to the previous day's cover of the *Hollywood Reporter*. It is titled "Drama queens" and features seven of Hollywood's hottest stars. Not one of them is black. "And, you know," he says, "the fact that we went from 2020, when everyone was putting up a black square [on their Instagram feeds] and saying Black Lives Matter, to this? From: 'I'm reading bell hooks for the first time' to now having trouble finding a single black actress in a drama series? It's shocking."

He waits a beat for an acknowledgment that he's right – and of course he is. Then off he bounces, following his brain to all the other things it's excited by.

*Slave Play is at the Noël Coward theatre, London WC2, from 29 June to 21 September*

# ‘It’s a job of such privilege...



# and I don't ever take it for granted'

*In her new book, Today presenter Mishal Husain turns her gaze from the daily grind of British politics to a key moment in her own backstory – the partition of India and her grandparents' lucky escape. Finding time after another 3am start – and a spot of baking – she talks to Rachel Cooke*

**Portrait by *Pål Hansen***

If you have ever listened to Mishal Husain on BBC Radio 4's *Today* and wondered at her preternatural early morning calm – a serenity, I would say, that is born of utmost preparedness as well as of her essential character – then all I can tell you is that outside the studio she's no different. Our meeting takes place the morning after the night before, when Rishi Sunak so rudely informed the nation there was to be a July election, and almost until the moment she opens her front door, I'm half expecting her to cancel: only a few hours ago, after all, she was quizzing a damp Chris Mason in Downing Street, the announcement having coincided with her regular shift as a presenter of the BBC's *News at Ten*. But if I'm the last person she feels like talking to, you'd never know. Here she is in her bare feet, all smiles, welcoming me like a friend. She has even baked biscuits for the occasion: small, delightfully short biscuits that taste lightly of cumin.

Made to a traditional Pakistani recipe, they are a hospitable nod to *Broken Threads*, the book she has written about her family and the partition of India, the great tapestry of which she somehow stitched together even as she did her job at the BBC. On this account alone, it feels slightly miraculous. The 3am starts for *Today*. The unrelenting pressure of the news cycle. How on earth did she do it?

But the greater triumph is that she has managed to make such a complex story so accessible. The vexed history *Broken Threads* traces goes back to 1837, and then forward again to the 1980s, along the way taking in not only the dramatic events of 1947, when India achieved independence from the British and Pakistan was born amid high tension and sectarian violence, but also of the second world war, when, as she puts it, "the empire was absolutely shaken to its core, the Japanese moving through a huge swathe of east Asia, right up to the Indian border" (her account of what happened in Burma is gripping).

Huge historical figures appear in its pages, most notably Muhammed Ali Jinnah, one of the founders of Pakistan and its first governor-general, and Louis Mountbatten, King George VI's second cousin and the last viceroy of India. But alongside them are four of those whose lives will be changed for ever by the drawing up of the new map, in the form of Husain's grandparents: Mary and Mumtaz, and Tahira and Shahid. Their stories are singular and surprising, but in the context of her book, they're also everyman figures. Their experience in 1947 was not unique. What happened to them, happened to so many.

It took her three years to write, but she'd been thinking about it for far longer, galvanised by the death of her father in 2016.

"For a while, I thought it would only be about my grandmothers," she says. "I was conscious that, through them, I could tell the story of women's lives in the 20th century, and how that played out in south Asia. But as is often the way, their husbands left behind far more that was written down – and I knew I'd have to use it."

In the end, though, it was something her maternal grandmother, Tahira, had once written that stuck in her mind. "She said: 'My generation were not complete for a long time after independence.' I began to see that this was a generational story. This shift from empire to nation state is one of the dominant themes and realities of the 20th century. But I also found myself thinking of Northern Ireland, and of cross-community consent. How do you find forms of governance where communities feel that their rights are not going to be trampled; that they're recognised, and heard, and their language protected?"

As someone whose "daily bread and butter" is British politics, Husain was fascinated by the decision-making involved in partition, "though I'm always conscious I'm looking at it with the benefit of hindsight, and through a 21st-century lens. It's easy to ask: why weren't they thinking in terms of unity? But they were a product of their times."

As ever, it is salutary to realise what an "immense amount" of power rested in the hands of a very few (male) individuals. Jinnah and Mountbatten had a notoriously bad relationship: "Jinnah was not a man Mountbatten thought of highly, and he was representing millions – maybe tens of millions – of Indian Muslims." If the foundation of Pakistan felt to a degree arbitrary to the people of India – it often did to me as I read *Broken Threads* – we might attribute that sense to these two, and to the Labour prime minister, Clement Attlee, who back in Britain was busy egging on the eager but out-of-his-depth viceroy.



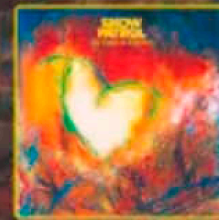
*I'm in bed at eight to get up at three. Who do I see? Mostly, security guards, Uber drivers, delivery men and cleaners*

I was chastened to discover how little I knew about partition. But Husain – kindly, perhaps – tells me such haziness isn't limited only to ignoramuses like me. Her grandparents, who left India for Pakistan as soon as the state was founded, didn't talk about it much themselves. Their connections helped them to travel there from India safely, avoiding the bloodshed that followed independence on 15 August, when millions of people found themselves on the wrong side of the new border (up to 1 million refugees were killed on both sides of the religious divide as Muslims travelled to Pakistan, and Hindus and Sikhs made their way to India).

Mary and Mumtaz, her paternal grandparents, and their four small children were booked on a train from Delhi to Lahore the day after independence – a route that would take them through the Punjab, where some of the worst violence was happening. But at the last moment a British RAF officer offered them a place on a flight, and they changed their minds. What a decision. When the train arrived in Lahore, every last person on it had been murdered. Meanwhile, on her mother's side, Shahid was already in Rawalpindi. However, Tahira and their children only got out of Shimla, where they were summering, thanks to Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, the commander-in-chief of the Indian army (Shahid was his private secretary and the two men were close friends). On Auchinleck's orders, a Hindu officer brought them down safely from the hills – they were advised to use family nicknames in conversation, a means of disguising their Muslim identity – after which they were flown to Pakistan on his private plane.

In other words, they were lucky – and it was this, Husain believes,

*Continued on page 15*












NOVEMBER




ICEAGE
LONDON ONLY
dust




REBEL DIAMONDS 2003
THE KILLERS 2023

*Continued from page 13*

that made them reticent. "I think it reduced their capacity to dwell on it because they felt that so many other people had suffered much more. I also think that in Pakistan, to harken back to how things were in India was not a good look. A sort of narrative developed: of the true Pakistanis, who were born on its land, and of those who, like my grandparents, had come from elsewhere. You might look unpatriotic [if you expressed regrets]."

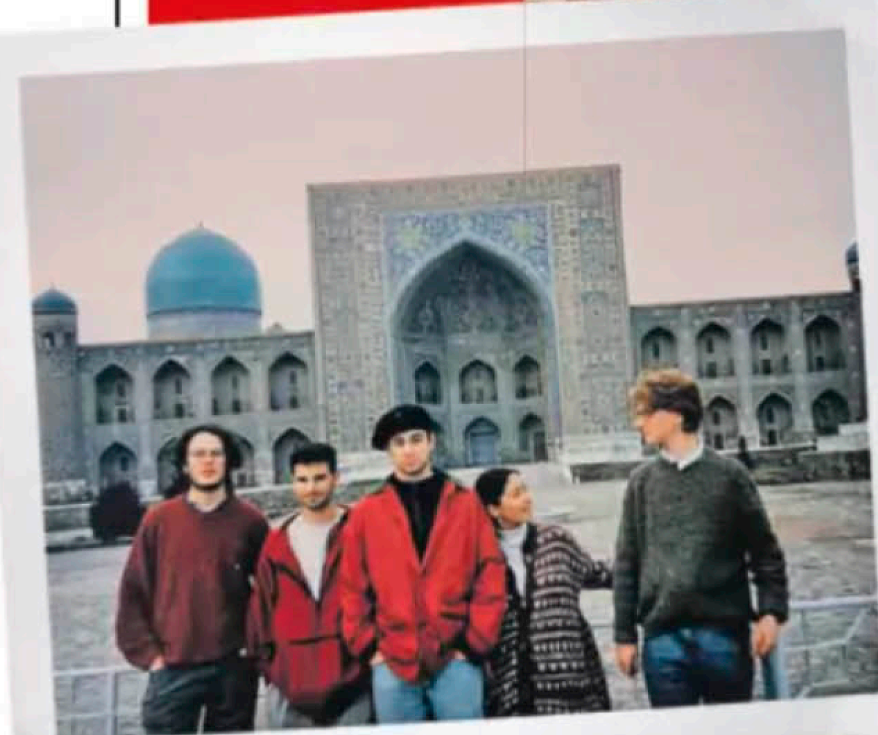
But in the end, she puzzled less over the "how" of her grandparents' situation than the "why". In some ways, the decision to leave India was unfathomable: they put behind them everything that they knew and loved; the continuing enmity and suspicion between the two nations meant that Shahid, for instance, was able to go back only once – he wanted to visit his father's grave – and only then because he'd become friends with an Indian high commissioner in Islamabad who helped him get a visa: "In Shahid's diary, there's an entry that made me wonder if the decision was made at the last minute: Auchinleck wanted to put him forward for the Indian army [Shahid was a Sandhurst-trained officer], so he could have stayed. What I would say now is that I don't think they thought it was a big decision at the time. They wouldn't have imagined how relations [between the two countries] would deteriorate; they might even have imagined a future federation. Shahid's home city, Lucknow, was so important to him… and yet he made only that one visit in the 1970s."

Her grandparents' lives are fascinating: Shahid's military career means that he meets Jinnah and Mountbatten; his relationship with Auchinleck, a brilliant general and an unexpectedly modern figure (he was not racist as others were) is unlikely and very interesting. Meanwhile, on the other side, there's Mumtaz, a young doctor from Multan who falls in love with a nurse called Mary, whose background is Anglo-Indian (she is from southern India, but her father was an Irishman), and when they marry, he does not ask her to give up her faith, thus risking rejection by his family. Her sister, Husain's aunt Anne, is still alive and kicking at the age of 99, and living not in India or even Pakistan, but in Oldham, Greater Manchester (there are, I should say, an remarkably high number of nuns in the book, which isn't what I was expecting, and a helpful reminder that identity is never straightforward).

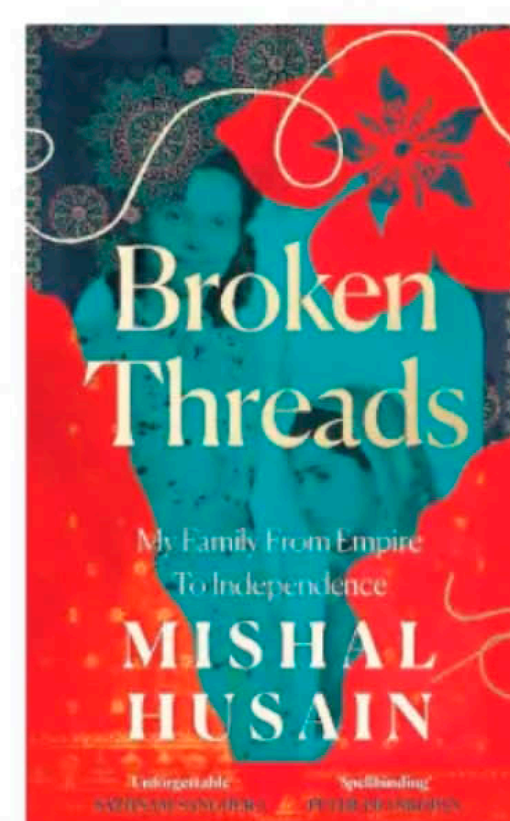
Husain's father, Imtiaz, a urologist, and her mother, Shama, a TV producer turned teacher, met when their parents (her grandparents) found themselves living next door to each other in Rawalpindi. By the time Husain was born – in Northampton in 1973 – they had moved to Britain, though her childhood was itinerant: the family went to live in the UAE when she was a toddler, and then in Saudi Arabia, at which point she was sent to boarding school in Kent. But the family's connection with Pakistan remained strong: Husain thinks they visited more often than they would have done had they been living in Britain. She spent the summer holidays in Rawalpindi, and when I ask how her grandparents seemed to her as a girl, she talks of their faith, always lightly worn ("no proselytising"), their integrity and fastidiousness, their anti-materialism.



*RIGHT Mishal Husain with her mother, Shama, outside Amir Kulal Mausoleum in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, March 2024. Yam G-Jun/ Guardian*



*BELOW Husain with friends in Samarkand during a visit to Uzbekistan in 1992. Sarah Rainsford*




*ABOVE Husain's new book, Broken Threads.*

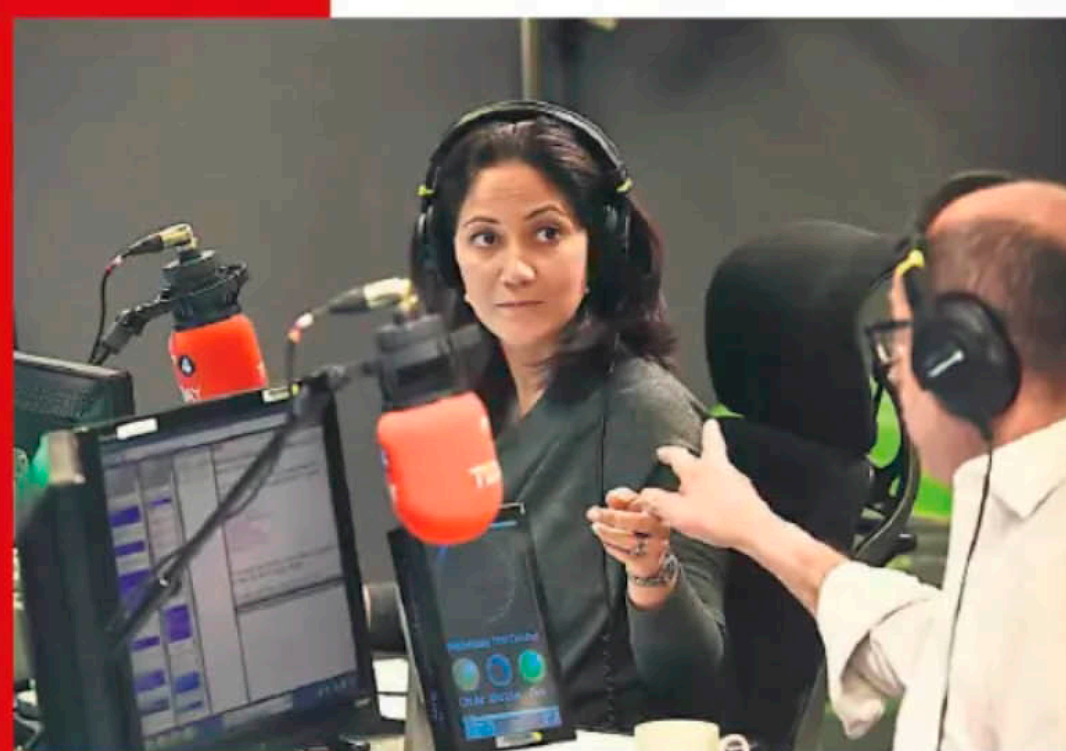
"I'm struck by this every time I go to Pakistan. My sense of self when I'm there is not as individualistic. Someone will say: 'So-and-so's relative has died, we must go and visit.' That's how I was brought up, with this very real sense you should be there for other people. It's embedded in me." (Right on cue, she now gently reminds me to try her baking.)

After Cambridge, where she studied law, her first job in journalism was at Bloomberg. She joined the BBC news channel in 1998 as a junior producer. "I think my decision to be a journalist was definitely influenced by the fact that my parents were part of a diaspora," she says. "Diaspora communities tend to be big news consumers. I grew up with the World Service, and CNN." She was always listening in to her parents' talk: of the famine in Cambodia ("that was why I had to eat my food"), of the assassination of Anwar Sadat in Egypt, and Indira Gandhi in India. "This hush [would fall] when they first heard the news about something." Was TV journalism sexist when she began? She shakes her head. "I didn't really experience the dinosaur era. I joined at a time when there was a much bigger effort at representation." Such representation is vital, she thinks, "in terms of the stories you cover, and the lens through which you look at them".

She joined *Today* in 2013 – a big deal all round. "It took me about three years to feel settled," she says. "It's such an exacting place to be, though it's also incredibly rewarding. It has taught me that the jobs which demand a lot of you, at least in my experience, are also the ones where you get a lot back. There is an intensity about it, and a sense of responsibility. People are listening. The direction an interview takes can really influence a story."

Is it addictive?

"I don't know about that, but it's hard to walk away from for that reason. You get to talk to incredible people."



*Alongside Nick Robinson on BBC Radio 4's Today programme. BBC*

Is it harder than it used to be to get politicians to answer questions? Perhaps. "And attention spans have also got shorter." She is exacting with herself, often coming off air and wondering what she might have done differently. What about chemistry? When she started, John Humphrys was still around; now the team is getting younger. Amol Rajan arrived first, and now she and Nick Robinson and Justin Webb have also been joined by Emma Barnett, late of *Woman's Hour*. Who does she most like to present with? She laughs. Am I deliberately trying to make her life more difficult? "It's very collegiate," she insists. "I've learned so much, because you see how other people use their time. You know, I'll see how fast they write their cues, and I'm, like: 'Oh my God, I'm so slow in comparison.'"

Often, she doesn't know who her interviewees will be until 4am on the day itself. I shudder at this – the deathly hour – but by now, she's blase when it comes to alarm clocks. "You do have to be disciplined," she says. "I'm in bed at eight to get up at three. But it's a privilege to work at that time in the morning. Who do I see? Mostly, I see security guards, Uber drivers, delivery men and cleaners. I'm going to work to do a job of such privilege, and I don't ever take it for granted."

Her sons are more or less grownup now (one is at university, the other two – twins – have A-levels coming up). "I'm on the brink of moving into a stage in life where maybe I'll be able to have some weekends away with my husband," she says, sounding almost amazed at the thought. But yes, there was a lot of wrangling when they were small.

The husband in question is Meekal, who works for an investment firm. "I don't really like reducing it to: I've got a supportive husband, because that's not all it is. I think I've been fortunate. Obviously, you choose the person you are going to marry, but you don't really know then what life is going to throw out; what it's going to be like to have children with someone, or when your parents are ill, or frankly when you're just faced with the daily grind. I think we've squabbled over things like housework over the years, and those issues can end up being very big. But he is the person I share my work dilemmas with… there's no way I could have had my career without feeling that it was a true partnership, some days one of us flat out and the other picking up the slack." She pauses. When they marked their 20th wedding anniversary last year, she put a picture of the day on Instagram. "I was hesitant about it, but then I thought: I've so much to be grateful for. People in my wider network have had very different experiences, and I just want to recognise that I have been blessed. That's how I see the world."

*Broken Threads: My Family from Empire to Independence is published by Fourth Estate (£18.99). To order a copy for £16.71 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*




# THE ILLUSION OF EFFORTLESSNESS

*Such is the grace and technique of Dutch hurdler Femke Bol, set to be a star of the Paris Olympics, that she appears to have the ability to bend time to her will. Geoff Dyer reflects on a rare phenomenon in modern sport*

In the lead-up to every Olympics a handful of athletes become the focus of expectant attention. From this handful one emerges or is selected as the "face" of the Games. In London in 2012 it was Jessica Ennis, who as a heptathlete embodied all-round Olympian excellence. This visibility is not solely a question of athletic ability; Ennis fulfilled the host nation's hopes by winning gold and by being incredibly nice, all the time. Usain Bolt's face and long limbs dominated multiple championships because he was the fastest, one of the most likable and – as a result – the most heavily sponsored track athlete in the world. Every time his image appeared somewhere – ie everywhere – it promoted an associative bundle comprising his running shoes (Puma), Visa, Gatorade, Jamaica, the Olympic ideal and, by a kind of meta extension, the value of sponsorship itself.

But whereas 90% of the footballers at this year's Euros will already be familiar to most people watching them on TV, in athletics this figure is probably reversed. The best-known athletes to emerge from a given championship might be people the majority of viewers had scarcely even heard of before. This would be true of Josh Kerr – identified, paradoxically, by his identity-obscuring Oakley shades – who surged to fame by beating Jakob Ingebrigtsen in the 1500m at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest last year, only to fade back into (temporary) obscurity when, outrageously, he was not even shortlisted for the BBC's increasingly irrelevant Sports Personality of the Year.

I was only vaguely conscious of Femke Bol before the Budapest championships. For those as ignorant now as I was then, she is a 24-year-old Dutch 400m hurdler and sprinter whose Budapest experience began disastrously. In an innovative and welcome event, the 400m mixed relay, she was neck and neck with the American Alexis Holmes until she stumbled and fell a few metres short of the line, spilling the baton, disqualifying herself and her team but thankfully – since the fall looked horrendous – avoiding injury. Five days later, as anticipated, she won the 400m hurdles, an awkward and exhausting event but not so riddled with jeopardy as the 110.

Then came the traditional close of the championships in the form of the 4x400 relays. The 4x400 is very different to the explosive, serial excitement of the 100m relay, in which batons are routinely dropped and hand-overs fumbled. Even when the race has been clearly won there follows a period of uncertainty as footage is scrutinised to see if any change-overs took place fractionally outside the box and so on. Deciding who should be awarded which medals often takes substantially longer than the race itself.

Such infringements also happen in the less frenetic and more spacious 4x400. The first leg is run in lanes before the second batch of runners head for the inside lanes midway through their lap. Subsequent hand-overs are characterised by a crowding-round-the-bar, desperately-waving-a-tenner-to-catch-the-bartender's-eye-at-last-orders jostle, which can cause the wheels to come off even a well-drilled team. The much-fancied American quartet did not make the final, having been disqualified in the heats.

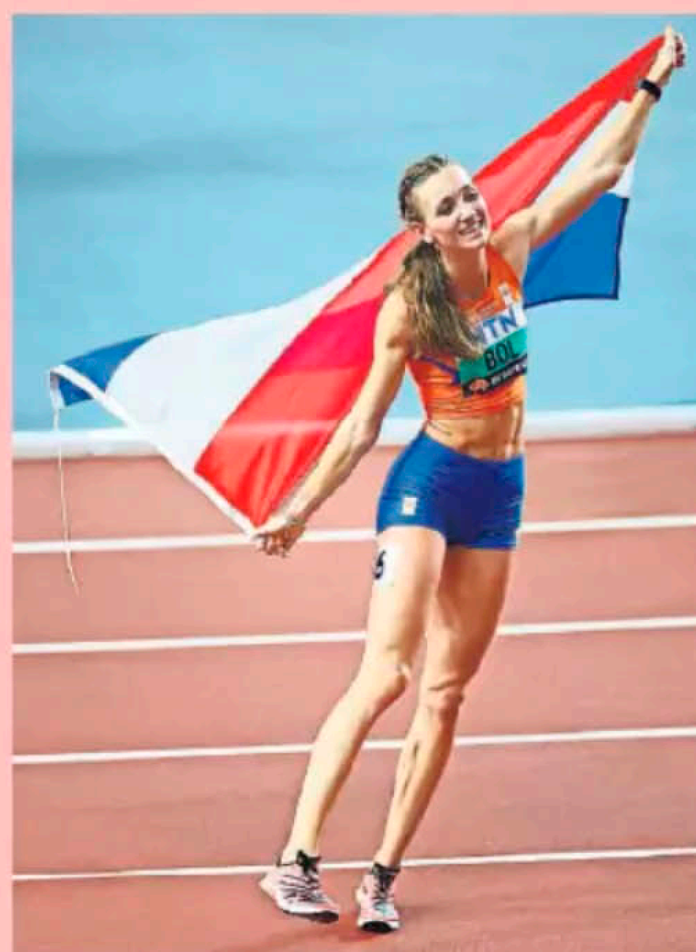
That left the Dutch, Canadians and Jamaicans as favourites, and the British with an improved chance of a place on the podium. After a long hold on the blocks the race began. Femke Bol was running the anchor leg (how I love that expression!) and at the last handover was in third place, way behind Nicole Yeargin of Britain and Stacey-Ann Williams of Jamaica, who was in the lead.

In the aftermath of a change-over, each leg tends to subside into a gentler phase. By any normal standards they're going hell for leather, of course, but this is not the sharply competitive part of the race as the athletes concentrate on settling into the cadence of their running. On this occasion, though, Williams went powering out as though the end might already be in sight. As she glanced up at the screen the immediate threat seemed to come from Yeargin. Bol was trailing in their wake, part of the event, obviously (in bronze medal position), but so far adrift that commentator Steve Cram said she was not even going for gold. What happened next is best conveyed by the closing words of WH Auden's poem The Fall of Rome: Bol started shrinking that distance, "silently and very fast".

Sport is not a beauty contest and athletic excellence is not always easy on the eye. I can't bear to watch Cameron Norrie; he has the ugliest forehand in tennis history. Every time he hits the ball it's a punch in the face of elegance. Roger Federer had the most beautiful game of any male player. Beauty is currently in short supply in women's tennis for the simple reason that the single-handed backhand is as extinct as a bird whose pleasing but fragile plumage has rendered it unfit, in evolutionary terms, to survive the WTA's grinding schedule of constant global migration. Joe Frazier was

> **WHILE IT DIDN'T SEEM PHYSICALLY POSSIBLE FOR BOL TO MAKE UP THE GROUND, SHE DID**

*Bol in action in the Diamond League in Oregon last year, left, and below, celebrating victory in the 400m hurdles final in Budapest.* *Ali Gradischer, Stephen Pond/ Getty*



a heroic boxer, throwing punches so hard that, in his own brutally beautiful formulation, "they'd of knocked a building down"; it was the person on the receiving end of that onslaught, Muhammad Ali, who was beautiful. Sprinter Ben Johnson erupted out of the blocks as if desperate to burst free of his body's limitations in a way that was consistent with Saint-Just's declaration: "I despise the dust of which I am compounded"; the speed of his detested rival Carl Lewis was contained by – and a sleek celebration of – the body. This kind of relationship is not simply one of hostility, or at least is enhanced by adversarial intensity. George Best looked more beautiful because of the lengths hard men such as Ron "Chopper" Harris were willing to go in order to make him less so.

A characteristic of this beauty is the illusion of effortlessness and an abundance of grace. Gravity seems to press less heavily on some athletes than on others (hence "float like a butterfly") and as a consequence – I'm conscious here of getting lost in the mysteries of physics – time expands.

Kerr beat Ingebrigtsen in a right old ding-dong. Interviewed after the race, Kerr said that at a certain point he knew he had "broken him" but to anyone watching it seemed possible that Ingebrigtsen might break him back. In the end he couldn't, Kerr butched it out, kept pumping. There was no physical contact but the confrontational quality of the race lingered afterwards in Ingebrigtsen's distinctly grudging and ungracious admission of defeat.

It was very different in the closing stages of the women's 4x400. Within broadly agreed ideas of biomechanically efficient technique, each athlete has a distinct style and rhythm. (Occasionally this is so distinct as to lie outside the consensual norm; Michael Johnson's oddly formal, straight-backed style of propulsion suggests he turned to running after being rushed off his feet as a waiter in a fine-dining restaurant.) In Bol's case it's not just that she appears fully at ease running at high speed; the faster she runs the more at ease she looks.

Commentators talk of athletes eating up the ground but that is too physical a metaphor. Athletics is about the body, but sometimes there's a metaphysical dimension or radiance to it. While it didn't seem physically possible for Bol to make up all the necessary ground, the *duration* of each second somehow expanded – even as the distance to the finishing line shrank – so that more and more could be accomplished within it. There was more time and space even as less of both remained! With her lengthy, easy, unforced stride – a stride that seemed to meet not with resistance but active encouragement each time a foot touched the track – Bol was clearly gaining on Yeargin. Might she even catch Williams? It was tactical, everything needed to be perfectly judged, but a sense of inevitability began to manifest itself: a feeling that wherever the line might be Bol would get there first. And she did, flowing past Williams with just 0.16 of a second between them.

There was more to come. Having mis-called what was happening earlier, Cram made up for it by declaring "Femke Bol is AmAAAzing". Anything less than this heartfelt outpouring of astonishment would have been a horrible understatement. She had won the race but it was a team victory. Her teammates left her with a great deal to do but they hadn't left her with *too* much to do. She collapsed on the track, "spent" as Jackson rightly said, while her teammates swarmed all over her. Then came something especially lovely. The Dutch men's team, who had not come close to a medal themselves, bounded on to the track and everyone was embracing. Watching these eight young people in a constantly shifting tangle of perfect arms and legs it seemed that, as an encore, we were being treated to a game of elite-level Twister. It was a world away from middle-aged Luis Rubiales, in a suit, baldly kissing the Spanish footballer Jenni Hermoso on the lips. This was more physical *and* less intrusive, an appropriate and shared expression of joy. And then the rival teams congratulated the Dutch. That was the most important thing of all. An intensely individual achievement had expanded to become more widely embraced and affirmed – and therefore a victory for sportsmanship.

Since that ecstatic triumph Bol has gone on to break the world indoor 400m record. She is poised to become one of the stars – perhaps *the* star – of the Paris Games and, before then, at the European Championships in Rome. Conscious that this little essay has strayed from its journalistic lane and stepped into the lexicon of love I'll end it in similar fashion: I'm counting the days till I see her (run) again.

*Geoff Dyer's most recent book, The Last Days of Roger Federer, is published by Canongate; Homework, a memoir, will be published next year, also by Canongate*

# ‘THIS IS NOT PUTIN’S WAR. THIS IS A WAR WAGED BY THE WHOLE RUSSIAN NATION’

*In 2022, Ukrainian author Oleksandr Mykhed was living an ordinary life with his wife in Kyiv. Now, after fleeing his home and volunteering for the army, he's written a powerful account of the past two years. In a cafe in his home city, he talks to Charlotte Higgins about losing friends, channelling his rage, and why Russian culture should be boycotted*

**Portrait by *Julia Kochetova***

Before 24 February 2022, writer Oleksandr Mykhed, then 33, and his wife, Olena, had an enviable life. In 2018 they'd bought a three-storey townhouse in Hostomel, a suburb of Kyiv. On Saturdays, they'd go out for brunch – poached eggs for him, cottage cheese pancakes for her – and walk their dog, Lisa, in the forest. Their weekend ritual involved cleaning the house, and for Mykhed, that often meant being pleasurably distracted by one of their many books. Life was full of things to look forward to: tickets for a Nick Cave concert; his new book, on classic Ukrainian authors, nearly finished. On weekend evenings they'd cook something delicious. Olena was perfecting her shrimp curry.

Just over two years later, I meet Mykhed at a Georgian cafe near Kyiv's central railway station. He's late because of an air raid alert: when the siren's sour notes rise through the rush-hour bustle, Kyvians, as usual, look at their phones, discover it's just planes loaded with ballistic missiles taking off in Russia, and by and large decide to get on with life. When Mykhed arrives, wearing a hoodie and cargo pants, he looks pale and tired, his once floppy blond hair shaved to a scalp-revealing military buzzcut. He volunteered for the armed forces as soon as the full-scale invasion started. He's not allowed to tell me anything about his service, except that he's just back after an exhausting 40-day training exercise. What he can tell me is that his old life is irretrievably lost. "I live with the feeling that I don't have a past. I live with the feeling that I don't have a future. I feel like my memories don't belong to me," he says. He doesn't even know how old he is, he says – 36, officially. The war has made him feel both way older than that, and way younger.

In the months leading up to Russia's invasion, the veil of normality was already beginning to slip. Over dinner one night in December 2021, Artem Chekh, a writer and veteran of the earlier phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war that began in 2014, remarked that a British magazine had asked him to write about preparations for a full-scale invasion. "I can't imagine Russians pummelling Kyiv with rockets just like that," Mykhed remembers saying. Nevertheless, he and Olena were sufficiently rattled that on 18 December they went on an unconventional shopping trip for a power bank, a knife, an axe, a head torch, freeze-dried food and a first aid kit – the ingredients of an emergency grab bag. Then, in mid-February, for the first time in his life, Mykhed touched a gun. He and Olena did a few hours' training on how to assemble and disassemble a Kalashnikov. The boundaries of what might constitute ordinary life were becoming thoroughly distorted.

And then came 24 February. Early that morning, the couple woke to a scene that should have been played out to Ride of the Valkyries: "It was helicopters, helicopters, and there was the smell of gunpowder in the air. That smell of gunpowder: as a writer, you realise this is a detail that you could not invent," he says. It was the Russians battling for the airport a few miles from their home. He tried to persuade his parents to leave the apartment they had recently moved to, in a nearby leafy commuter town. They refused, and stayed at home. That evening, Mykhed and Olena took their grab bags and got out of there, heading to the south-western city of Chernivtsi.

Within less than a week, life had completely transformed. The house in Hostomel was destroyed by a direct artillery hit. He signed up for the military. His parents were enduring occupation at home in Bucha; its streets were soon strewn with the corpses of civilians. It was more than three months before he saw the physical ruins of his old life: birds had already nested in the wreck of his house, among the Dostoevskys and Nabokovs, the Russian classics his wife, who visited earlier, decided not to rescue from the rubble. In his new book, *The Language of War*, Mykhed remarks that only a bad poet would be tempted to use those nesting birds as some kind of metaphor for stirrings of new life.

And the other guests at that dinner party, back in the old life, in December 2021? One is already dead: Viktor Onysko, a film editor who also signed up to the army, was killed, aged 40, by a Russian shell on the penultimate day of 2022. One of the chapters of Mykhed's new book is a "requiem" for this beloved friend, whose call sign was Tarantino. "It is not normal, for any writer from my generation to know how to write requiems and obituaries for friends and fellow writers. But I know how to do that. And I don't want to do that any more," he says.

*The Language of War* is a book told in short, jabbing, paragraphs, written in the moment, and charting the

*Continued on page 21*

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first year of Russia's invasion, precisely, he says, to preserve his "huge feeling of rage". Scattering fragments of his exploded past through the brutal reality of a grindingly violent present, he connects "what's happening to me, what's happening to my family, what's happening to my friends," to the wider story of "what's happening to my generation, what's happening to the country". He wants the book to be "a time capsule for myself so that I know where I've been, when in five years or 10 years, my rage won't be so sharp. And I want it to be sharp." *The Language of War* is, he says, a testament of "rage, love and memory".

Mykhed's rage is epic, Homeric. Russia's invasion is genocidal, he argues. He points to double-tap strikes (when rescue missions are deliberately targeted); the use of phosphorus bombs; the abduction of thousands of children; ecologically consequential events such as the destruction of the Kakhovka dam and the occupation of Chornobyl nuclear power plant; the mass killing of civilians (a total still unknowable, but in Mariupol alone, for example, the Ukrainian city authorities estimated that 22,000 were killed during two months of fighting). His rage is against not just Putin but against the Russians – "because this is not Putin's war. This is a war waged by the whole Russian nation, and all the people that are coming here to commit war crimes, and all the little people who think that they don't influence it, but who are part of the evil."

The Russian invasion is now scything through a generation of young Ukrainian men. In Kyiv and in Odesa, I've started hearing men in their late 20s and 30s discuss how they need to achieve as much as they can in their lives now, before they are mobilised, before they are killed. The war is killing farmers, doctors, engineers, IT specialists, people from all walks of life. And it is killing artists. Throughout Ukraine's history, Mykhed says, artists have been killed before they've reached their full potential; it's a cliche that Ukrainian writers die young, he says. The history of Ukrainian literature is "the promising debut, the first collection or second collection of stories, the future that might happen were it not for the Russian empire, or the Soviet Union," he says. The horror is that "now we're talking about the same thing, we have a generation of lost poets and writers."

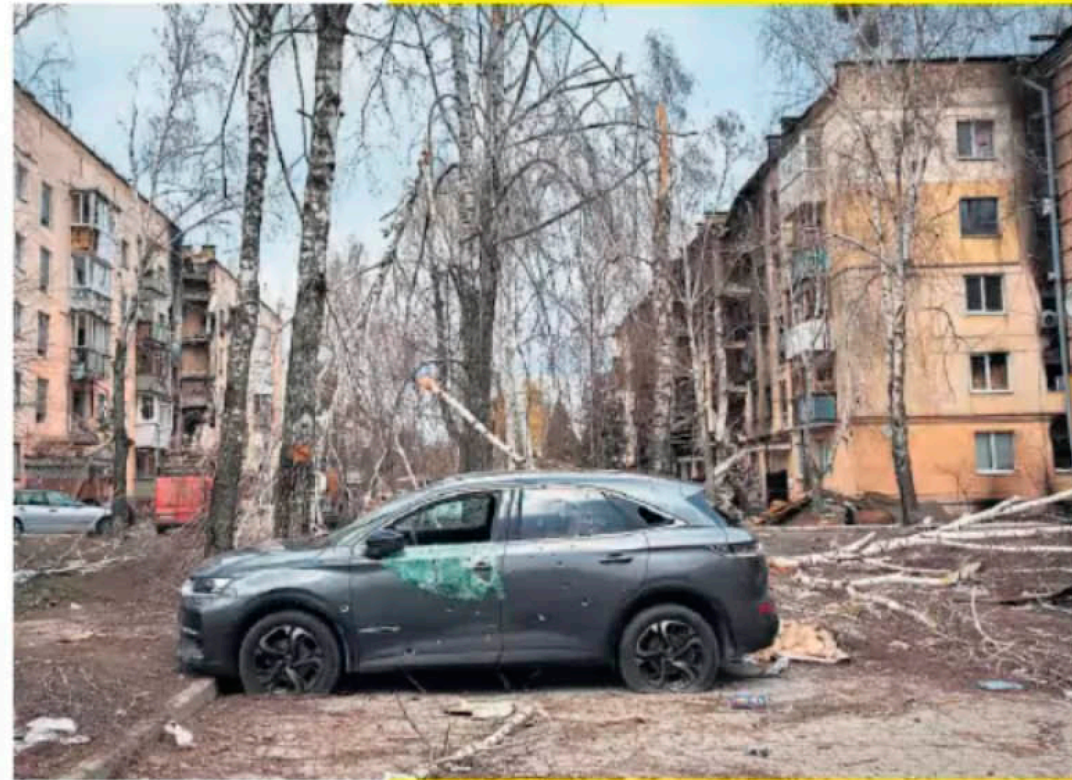
He names Victoria Amelina, a novelist turned war crimes investigator who had started writing poems before she was killed in a missile attack on a pizza restaurant last summer. "We are losing artists, actors, musicians, writers – a black void of loss," he says. He also mentions poet Maksym Kryvtsov – callsign Dali – killed in action, "the author of one great poetry collection". He believes Russian culture should be boycotted, and not just in Ukraine, but elsewhere, too, because, he argues, Russia uses culture as part of its "hybrid warfare". He points to the director of the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, Mikhail Piotrovsky, who has been quoted as describing international exhibitions sent out by Russia as "a 'special operation', a great cultural offensive". The emotion he feels, he tells me, is specifically "not hatred, it is rage, because hatred doesn't give you power, it's more chaotic. But rage gives you words."

Words are at the disposal of the writer, always – but what use are they when your country is invaded? As Ukrainian poet Halyna Kruk has put it: "No metaphors work against an armed soldier. No poetry can save you from a tank." However, words have other uses, providing you survive. That morning of 24 February, amid the terror, Mykhed realised he was witnessing a historic moment; that as an author, he should document it. "So I started writing in a notebook the feeling, the thought, the detail," he says. These early observations became an essay published in March 2022, the basis of the first chapter of *The Language of War*. "The day I finished that text was the day I volunteered for the armed forces. Because I thought back then that this was not the time for writing. I had done my manifesto, I had told the world what we needed... I had done my work as an essayist and as a writer and I was now in the military."

But his work as a writer was far from done. As time went on, terrible events unfolded: the killing of some of

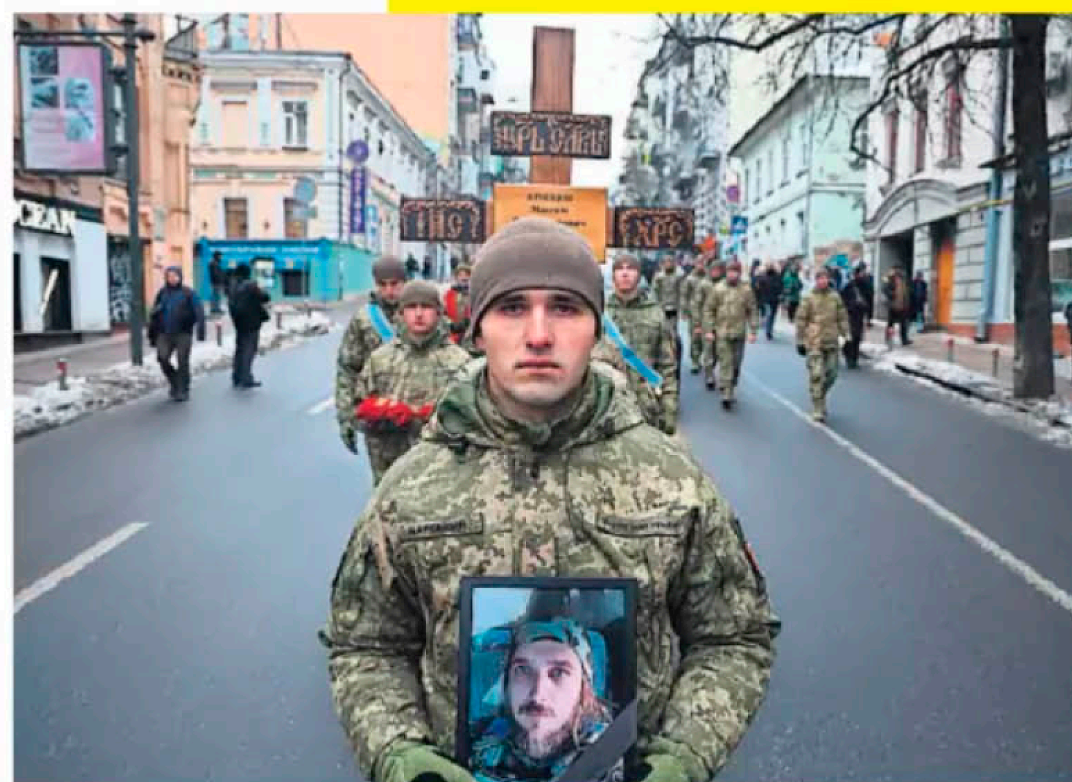


*An aerial view of destroyed houses in Irpin, Kyiv Oblast, 23 June 2022. Metin Aktas/ Anadolu Agency via Getty*

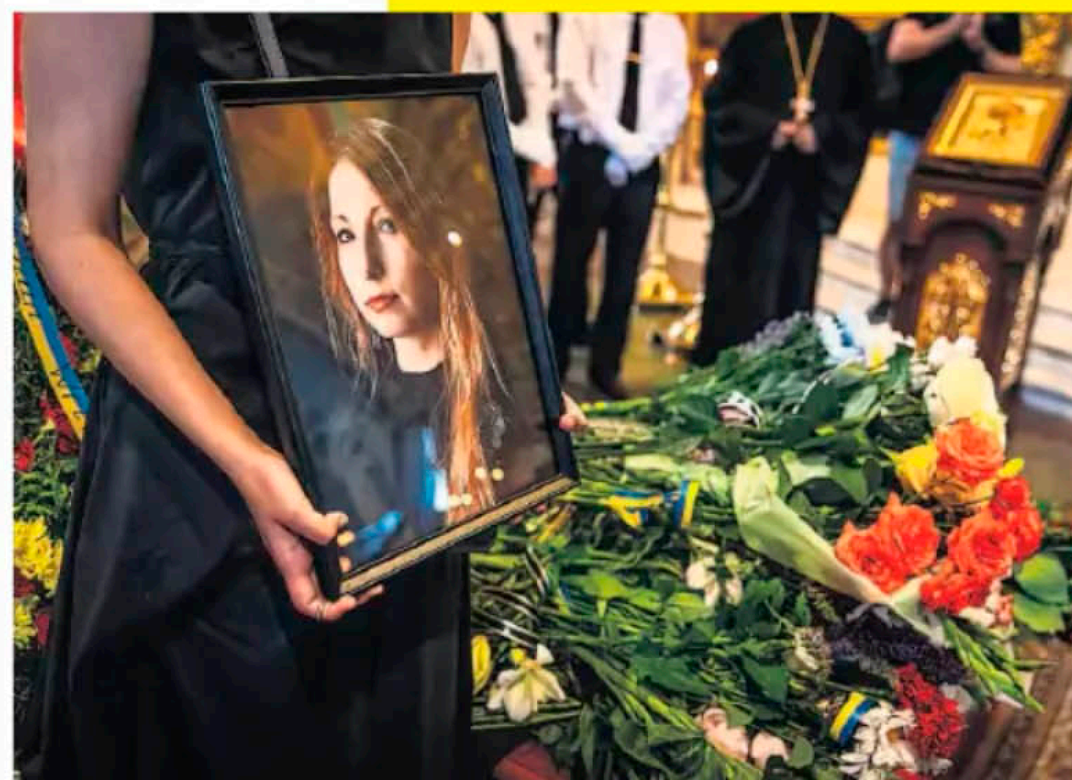


*A heavily damaged neighbourhood in Hostomel, Kyiv Oblast, 8 April 2022. Anastasia Taylor-Lind/ the Observer*

> ONE OF THE FUNCTIONS OF ART NOW IS TO TRY TO REMIND PEOPLE THAT THIS SCALE OF LOSS IS NOT NORMAL



*A soldier carries a portrait of Maksym Kryvtsov, a Ukrainian poet killed in action on 7 January 2024 aged 33. Getty*



*A memorial service for Ukrainian writer and human rights activist Victoria Amelina, who died aged 37 after being injured in a Russian missile strike at a restaurant in Kramatorsk. Shutterstock*

his neighbours, the experience of his parents in hiding in Bucha. "I realised that actually there was only one mechanism I could use to cope with this reality: I had to write." Those short, jumpy paragraphs echo "how I breathe". The time isn't right, he says, for metaphor or symbolism or elaborate prose. "I'm trying to survive, I'm not trying to 'think big'. I'm not trying to invent some kind of new art. I'm trying to make a document about a massacre."

We talk about life here in Kyiv: here we are, sitting at a pleasant outdoor table on a terrace sipping mineral water. It is May, the weather is beautiful. The chestnut trees and acacias and roses are blooming. People are walking in the parks, eating out, and drinking a lot of delicious coffee, the preparation and consumption of which is taken extremely seriously in Ukraine. Olena, as well as volunteering for the war effort, has opened a bar in central Kyiv where very fine cocktails are served (Mykhed's parents and indeed the dog, Lisa, are also safe for the moment). It looks normal, in a way – because, as Mykhed says: "We can have a nice drink, we can have lunch, we have taxis, we have a banking system, we have wifi, we have everything." But it's not normal, it's really not.

"We have air raid alerts. And we say, 'Let's hope it's only a short one,'" (which is exactly what I'd texted Mykhed earlier). "At the moment, we are having new blackouts. Again, this is totally abnormal for Europe during the 21st century, but it's normal for Ukrainians who say, 'Oh, it's almost summer, it's not like it was a year and a half ago when we had them during the winter, so we're going to be fine.' Each day, you have this feeling that the borders of normality are changing." Another aspect of this boundary shifting, he says, is how military losses are folded into an acceptable statistical range. "One of the functions of art now is to try to remind people that this scale of loss is not normal."

I have swallowed my instinct to ask Mykhed the Englishwoman's phatic question, "How are you?" – there's a section in the book where he describes what an impossible question this is to answer. But I do ask him about his failed attempt at having therapy, which he also mentions in *The Language of War*. He laughs. "You want to talk about that? The whole mechanism of trying to feel at least something is really interesting." He feels numb, a lot of the time. Playing basketball has become a coping strategy. It's a couple of hours when "I don't think about anything except being with my team".

He adds: "The particularity of the full-scale invasion is that you don't have time to reflect, or any time for grieving, because each day brings something even more horrible into your mind: another missile attack; somebody else from your circle has been killed by Russians. It's like a huge void inside of your body and everything is going into this void. Some of my friends are asking: 'Are we gonna be OK when this ends? Is there any way that we will be normal, compared with our generation in different countries?' And I don't know."

Mykhed's face lights up when he tells me about the book on classic Ukrainian authors he was just finishing when the Russians invaded, which he co-wrote with his father, Pavlo, a literary scholar: its delayed publication date happens to be the day we meet. Its Ukrainian title translates as Alive – which, with a heavy resonance, is also the single word that his parents managed to text him during their weeks under occupation in Bucha. The book ranges from the formative years of the Ukraine-born Mykola Hohol – or, to use the Russian version of his name, Nikolai Gogol (his father's lifelong academic focus) – all the way to novelist Taras Prokhasko, "a contemporary classic", he says. Celebrating his colleagues – whether poets, painters or photographers – feels urgent, now. Especially the living ones, and especially those of his own generation.

"In normal life, people say: 'Oh, we will see in 50 years, how great his or her work was.' But that doesn't work for me, because we are living in circumstances where we don't know if we will have time for that." Amid the bleakness, there's a gleam of hope and a great deal of resolve about Mykhed. "The future: I don't know when it will come. But for those who survive, the future is going to be bright. The issue is just how to stay alive."

*The Language of War is published by Allen Lane (£18.99). To order a copy for £16.71 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*



# Flat like a sheet, curved, a giant doughnut – what shape is the universe?

*Rather than stretching to infinity, the universe may be finite and take a form that can eventually be mapped. There are 18 possible topologies, some with bizarre implications, writes Philip Ball*

We may be living in a doughnut. It sounds like Homer Simpson's fever dream, but that could be the shape of the entire universe – to be exact, a hyperdimensional doughnut that mathematicians call a 3-torus.

This is just one of the many possibilities for the topology of the cosmos. "We're trying to find the shape of space," says Yashar Akrami of the Institute for Theoretical Physics in Madrid, a member of an international partnership called Compact (Collaboration for Observations, Models and Predictions of Anomalies and Cosmic Topology). In May, the Compact team explained that the question of the shape of the universe remains wide open and surveyed the future prospects for pinning it down.

"It's high-risk, high-reward cosmology," says team member Andrew Jaffe, a cosmologist at Imperial College London. "I would be very surprised if we find anything, but I'll be extremely happy if we do."

The topology of an object specifies how its parts are connected. A doughnut has the same topology as a teacup, the hole being equivalent to the handle: you can remould a clay doughnut into a cup shape without tearing it. Similarly, a sphere, cube and banana all have the same topology, with no holes.

The idea that the whole universe can have a shape is hard to picture. In addition to the topology there is another aspect: the curvature. In his theory of general relativity in 1916, Albert Einstein showed that space can be curved by massive objects, creating the force of gravity.

Imagine space as two-dimensional, like a sheet, rather than having all three spatial

dimensions. Flat space is like a flat sheet of paper, while curved space could be like the surface of a sphere (positive curvature) or a saddle (negative curvature).

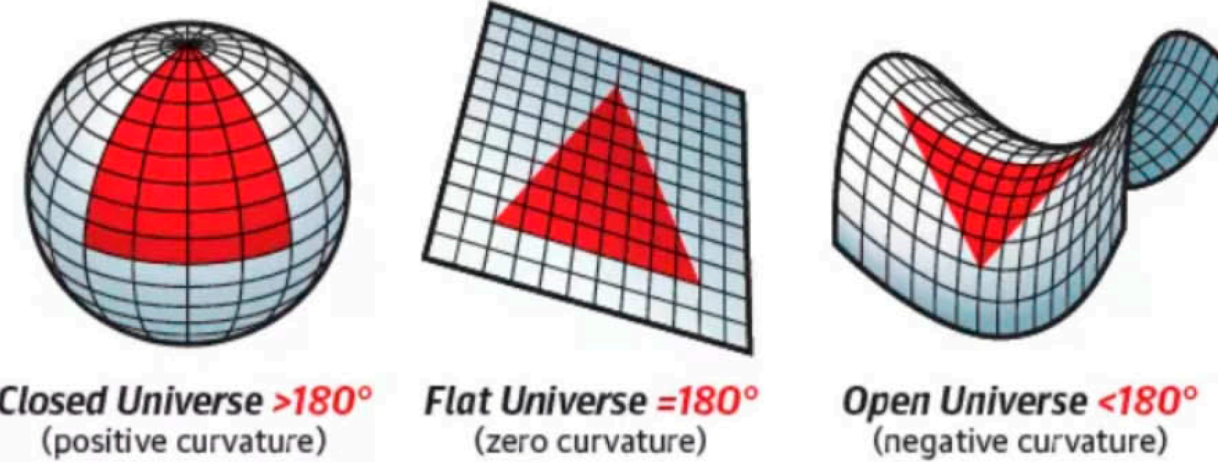
These possibilities can be distinguished by simple geometry. On a flat sheet, the angles of a triangle must add up to 180 degrees. But on a curved surface, that's no longer so. By comparing the real and apparent size of distant objects such as galaxies, astronomers can see that our universe as a whole seems to be as close to flat as we can measure: it's like a flat sheet pocked with little dimples where each star deforms the space around it.

"Knowing what the curvature is, you know what kinds of topologies are possible," says Akrami. Flat space could just go on for ever, like an infinite sheet of paper. That's the most boring, trivial possibility. But a flat geometry also fits with some topologies that cosmologists euphemistically call "nontrivial", meaning that they're far more interesting and can get pretty mind-boggling.

*The Milky Way glows in a clear night sky above St Catherine's Chapel, Abbotsbury, Dorset, August 2021. Graham Hunt/Alamy Live News*

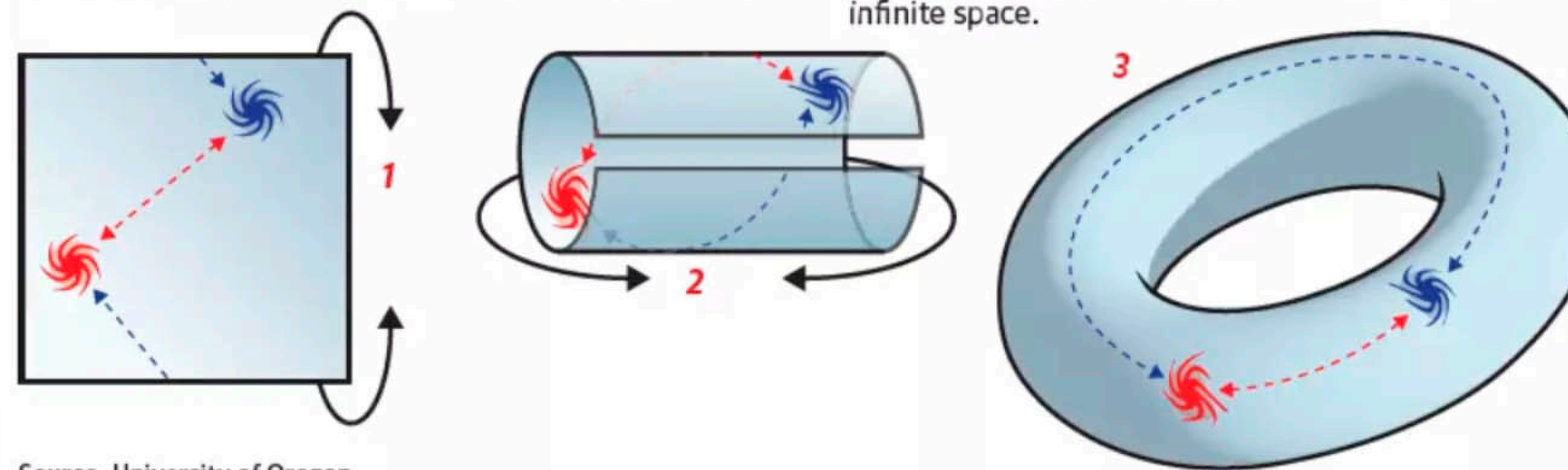
## Different geometries

In the three geometric scenarios, space-time might bend in on itself, be flat or bend outwards – and the angles of a triangle would either exceed, be equal to or be less than 180°




## Imagining a doughnut universe

One of the topologies possible for the universe is a **Euclidian 3-torus**. Although hard to visualise in three dimensions, the equivalent for a two-dimensional space is a 2-torus: a simple doughnut. Imagine a two-dimensional sheet. Two edges can curve to meet, making a cylinder, and the ends of that would loop around to form a ring shape. In this scenario, light would travel from one galaxy to another in different directions and multiple instances of it would be visible. Although finite, the endless line of sight would give the impression of infinite space.




Source: University of Oregon

There are, for mathematical reasons, precisely 18 possibilities. In general, they correspond to the universe having a finite volume but no edges: if you travel farther than the scale of the universe, you end up back where you started. It's like the screen of a video game in which a character exiting on the far right reappears on the far left – as though the screen is twisted into a loop. In three dimensions, the simplest of these topologies is the 3-torus: like a box from which, exiting through any face, you re-enter through the opposite face.

Such a topology has a bizarre implication. If you could look out across all the universe – which would require the speed of light to be infinite – you would see endless copies of yourself in all directions, like a 3D hall of mirrors. Other, more complex topologies are variations on the same theme, where, for example, the images would appear slightly shifted – you re-enter the box in a different place, or perhaps twisted so that right becomes left.

If the universe's volume is not too big, we may then be able to see such duplicate images – an exact copy, say, of our own galaxy. "People started looking for topology on very small scales by looking for images of the Milky Way," says Jaffe. But it's not entirely straightforward because of the finite speed of light – "you have to look for them as they were a long time ago" – and so you may not recognise the duplicate. Also, our galaxy is moving, so the copy won't be in the same place as we are now. And some of the more exotic topologies would also shift it. In any event, astronomers have seen no such cosmic duplication.

If, on the other hand, the universe is really immense yet not infinite, we may never be able to distinguish between the two, says Akrami. But if the universe is finite, at least along some directions, and not much larger than the farthest we can see, then we should be able to detect its shape.

One of the best ways to do that is to look at the cosmic microwave background (CMB): the very faint glow of heat left over from the big bang itself, which fills the cosmos with microwave radiation. First detected in 1965, the CMB is one of the key pieces of evidence that the big bang happened at all. It is very nearly uniform throughout the cosmos. But as astronomers have developed ever more precise telescopes to detect and map it across the sky, they have found tiny variations in the "temperature" of this microwave sea from place to place. These variations are remnants of random temperature differences in the nascent universe – differences that helped to seed the emergence of structure, so that matter in the universe is not spread evenly throughout the cosmos like butter on bread.

Thus the CMB is a sort of map of what the universe looked like at the earliest stage we can still observe today (about 10bn years ago), imprinted on the sky all around us. If the universe has a nontrivial topology that produces copies in some or all directions, and if its volume is not significantly larger than the sphere on which we see the projection of the CMB, then these copies should leave traces in the temperature variations.

> *If you could look out across the universe, you'd see copies of yourself in all directions, like a 3D hall of mirrors*

Two or more patches will match, like duplicates of fingerprints. But that's not easy to detect, given that these variations are random and faint and that some topologies would shift the duplicates around. Nonetheless, we can search among the statistics of the tiny temperature variations and see if they are random or not. It's pattern-seeking, like traders looking for nonrandomness in fluctuations of the stock market.

The Compact team has taken a close look at the chances of finding anything. It showed that, even though no nonrandom patterns have yet been seen in the CMB map, neither have they been ruled out. In other words, many weird cosmic topologies are still entirely consistent with the observed data. "We haven't ruled out as many interesting topologies as some previously thought," says Akrami.

Isn't it, though, a little perverse to imagine that the universe may have some twisted-doughnut shape rather than having the simplest possible topology of infinite size? Not necessarily. Going from nothing to infinity in the big bang is quite a step. "It's easier to create small things than big things," says Jaffe. "So it's easier to create a universe that is compact in some way – and a nontrivial topology does that."

Besides, there are theoretical reasons to suspect that the universe is finite. There is no agreed theory of how the universe originated, but one of the most popular frameworks for thinking about it is string theory. But current versions of string theory predict that the universe shouldn't have just four dimensions (three of space, plus time) but at least 10.

String theorists argue that maybe all the other dimensions became highly "compactified": they are so small that we don't experience them at all. But then why would only six or so have become finite while the others remained infinite? "I would say it is more natural to have a compact universe, rather than four infinite dimensions and the others compact," says Akrami.

And, says Ralf Aurich, an astronomer at Ulm University in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, if the search for cosmic topology shows that at least three of the dimensions are indeed finite, that would rule out many of the possible versions of string theory.

Will we ever know the answer? "It is quite likely that the universe is finite, but with the topology scale larger than what we can probe with observations," says the astrophysicist Neil Cornish of Montana State University in Bozeman. But he adds that some odd features in the CMB pattern "are exactly the kind you would expect in a finite universe, so it is worth probing further".

The problem with seeking patterns in the CMB, Cornish says, is given how each of the 18 flat topologies can be varied, "there are an infinite number of possibilities to consider, each with its own unique predictions, so it is impossible to try them all out." Maybe the best we can do, then, is decide which possibilities seem most probable and see if the data fits those.

Aurich says that a planned improvement of the CMB map in an international project called CMB stage 4, using a dozen telescopes in Chile and Antarctica, should help the hunt. But the Compact researchers suspect that, unless we get lucky, the CMB alone may not allow us to answer the topology question definitively.

However, they say there is plenty of other astronomical data we can use too: not just what's on the "sphere" of the CMB map but what's inside it, in the rest of space. "Everything in the universe is affected by the topology," says Akrami. "The ideal case will be to combine everything that is observable and hopefully that will give us a large signal of the topology." The team wants either to detect that signal, he says, or show that it's impossible.

There are several instruments now in use or in construction that will fill in more details of what is inside the volume of observable space, such as the European Space Agency's Euclid space telescope, launched last year, and the SKA Observatory (formerly the Square Kilometre Array), a system of radio telescopes being built in Australia and South Africa. "We want a census of all the matter in the universe," says Jaffe, "which will enable us to understand the global structure of space and time."

If we manage that – and if it turns out that the cosmic topology makes the universe finite – Akrami imagines a day when we have a kind of Google Earth for the entire cosmos: a map of everything.



# Susan Solomon

*The atmospheric chemist talks to Killian Fox about why she doesn't share the pessimism of most climate scientists, fixing the ozone layer – and why Jacques Cousteau is her hero*

Susan Solomon was born and raised in Chicago and got her PhD in atmospheric chemistry from the University of California, Berkeley. She is known for her work in the 1980s establishing how the Earth's protective ozone layer was being depleted by human-made chemicals. Her studies formed the basis of the 1989 Montreal protocol – an international agreement that helped eliminate 99% of these harmful solvents. Now a professor of environmental studies and chemistry at MIT, Solomon has written three books; the third, *Solvable: How We Healed the Earth, and How We Can Do It Again*, which applies lessons from past environmental successes to the climate crisis, is published this week.

**What got you interested in science?**
Easy answer: Jacques Cousteau – I thought it was just the most incredible thing I'd ever seen. But then I didn't really like biology, and I loved chemistry. As I started reading about planetary atmospheres I thought: Oh, my goodness, chemistry on a planet instead of in a test tube! I want to do that!

**What prompted you to write this book?**
Having done a lot of work on the ozone hole, one is constantly asked: "If we could [solve the problem] for ozone, can we do it for climate change?" I had a lot of experience with the policy community with the Montreal protocol [an international treaty to protect the ozone layer], as well as with the IPCC, so I learned a lot about how policy is made. And I was fascinated by the question of, why are these problems different?

**What is does the ozone layer do?**
We wouldn't have life on the planet's surface if we didn't have an ozone layer, because it protects us from ultraviolet light from the sun that would otherwise be very damaging to everything biological.

By the 1980s it was becoming clear that we were depleting it through the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in aerosols and refrigerators, among other things. We have many measurements that show we have increased the amount of chlorine in the atmosphere by about a factor of six compared with the small amount nature can produce. It's overwhelmingly human-made chlorine and almost all of that is from CFCs – hairspray and underarm deodorant were the source of most of the world's emissions.

**Despite the global scale of the issue, the ozone crisis was addressed remarkably quickly.**
The level of standing infrastructure investment that the chemical industry had back then was relatively small compared to what the fossil fuel industry has today. It was only ever a dozen companies worldwide and a few billion dollars maximum. And the companies weren't really being forced out of the business; they were being forced to change their business, and they had different degrees of recalcitrance.

**Aside from the ozone crisis, what did you learn from researching other issues such as smog and lead that we might carry forward to the fight against global heating?**
Over the years in America and in the UK, we developed this anti-regulation mindset: regulation is bad, the market will find the best possible solution. Well, the market may find the most cost-effective solution. And the cost is the key thing there, and whether it's best or not depends on your values, because if the market finds a solution that eliminates nature, some people would care about that. And what is actually the value of nature? And what's the value of your child not getting asthma? We don't put a price on that, because [it depends] upon our values. This whole idea of, we'll do it the cheapest way – we just have to get past that.

Industry will fight, because they have an awful lot to protect. They have massive investments in fossil fuel infrastructure. And they have all these assets, whether it be the rights to go out and cut down this mountaintop and sell it as coal, or offshore oil rigs that are very expensive pieces of equipment. So you total it all up and it's something in the order of a $40tn industry, completely dwarfing the chemical industry at the time of the CFC issue. But it's interesting that the concept



*Susan Solomon: 'Frankly, I worry about climate scientists being encouraged to take a particular stance.'*
*Portrait by Justin Knight*

of stranded assets has become part of the vocabulary, and people are beginning to realise how much power they actually have, in terms of the way we make our investments – in your retirement fund, or choice of bank. Social choice is becoming part of the way people are thinking about bringing pressure on industries that are part of those assets. This is all part of why I'm optimistic.

**In the *Guardian* last month, climate scientists were surveyed and many reported feeling despair – 77% believe global temperatures will hit at least 2.5C above pre-industrial levels and 42% think they'll exceed 3C. Do you share their pessimism?**
Well, the past year has been a surprise – hotter than anyone expected. There's a lot of work going on to try to figure it out. So, yeah, that is certainly scary, but I don't share the pessimism. And I worry, frankly, about climate scientists being encouraged to take a particular stance ... There has long been a group of people who believe we should tell the worst stories we possibly can, because then the public will wake up and that will enable change. That has not really worked. Also, you can't look at the [falling] price of solar energy and batteries and not see big change coming. And the idea that we're going to go past 3C is very hard for me to see, because it's pretty clear that the Paris agreement has already put us on a trajectory that won't exceed that. Can we stay within 2C, given how the prices of clean energy have come down? I think we can.

**One lesson from your book is that, for the average person, the most impactful thing is to band together with others to push for change.**
Yes, that is the biggest impact, for sure. It's been the kickstarter in so many past environmental problems and it has already kickstarted us on this problem. For goodness sake, let's not give up now, we're right on the cusp of success. That's the fundamental message of the book.

**To come back to where we started with the ozone layer. Is there still a problem up there? Is it fixed now?**
We have seen the CFCs going up, up, up and now coming down, down, down. So that has been spectacular, a massive environmental success story. And it involves every country in the world – the Montreal protocol is the only UN agreement signed by every country that was formally part of the UN. That's pretty cool.

It also helped the climate change issue, by the way, because CFCs are very strong greenhouse gases. If we hadn't pulled back on them, we'd be looking at an extra degree of warming by 2050, and then, for sure, 2C would have been out of reach. But we checked a degree off by dialling down on CFCs. How cool is that?

*Solvable: How We Healed the Earth, and How We Can Do It Again by Susan Solomon is published by the University of Chicago Press (£21). To order a copy for £21 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020 3176 3837. Delivery charges may apply*

The networker

# John Naughton



## Look before you scan – the QR code scammers are phishing for business

Here's a familiar scenario. You're going to a meeting in an unfamiliar part of town. You're running late and it's raining. And there isn't a car park in sight. Ah, but here's some on-street parking and you gratefully pull into the empty bay. Now all you have to do is pay for a couple of hours and then scuttle along to your meeting. But the parking meter (of course) no longer takes coins. This is the 21st century, after all.

No worries – you can pay by phone. There are notices plastered all over the meter on how to pay using an app that – of course – you have not yet downloaded. The rain is getting heavier and there's no mobile signal. You're getting increasingly flustered. And then you spot that there's a Quick Response (QR) code – a nice (if incomprehensible) square with lots of funny squares and spaces – on one side of the meter. Phew! All you have to do is scan it and you'll be through to a website in no time. So you do and you are. Job done. Relax.

Er, possibly. Or possibly not. Because you were flustered, you probably didn't take a close look at the QR code. Was it an integral part of the payment instructions issued by the local council? Or had it been pasted over the official QR code? If it's the latter, then you've been scammed.

Just like David Birch's sister. Birch is a renowned expert on digital identity and he tells her story on his blog, In the Future, Everyone Will Be Famous for 15Mb. On a visit to some friends, she parked her car in a public car park. "She went to look at the schedule of charges and there was a handy sign advising drivers with smartphones to pay via a QR code. She scanned the code and was directed to a superficially plausible website. After giving her debit card details to what she thought was a legitimate car parking company, my sister fortunately spotted that the website was wholly fraudulent and was able to alert her bank in time to block transactions. But plenty of other people are getting caught in these scams as QR codes are quickly becoming a favourite tool in the criminal fraternity, with one cybersecurity vendor saying that QR featured in a fifth of phishing campaigns it detected in the first weeks of the final quarter of last year."

In the past few years, QR codes have become ubiquitous. It's now nearly impossible to board a plane without having a code on your phone, for example. Likewise, an increasing number of rail passengers have them instead of paper tickets. The imperative to go contactless during Covid really turbocharged the spread of the technology. Want to see the menu in a restaurant? Just scan a QR code.

The codes are essentially two-dimensional barcodes, but have the advantage that they can carry a lot more information than their linear cousins. So they're genuinely useful. And so, so seductively convenient.

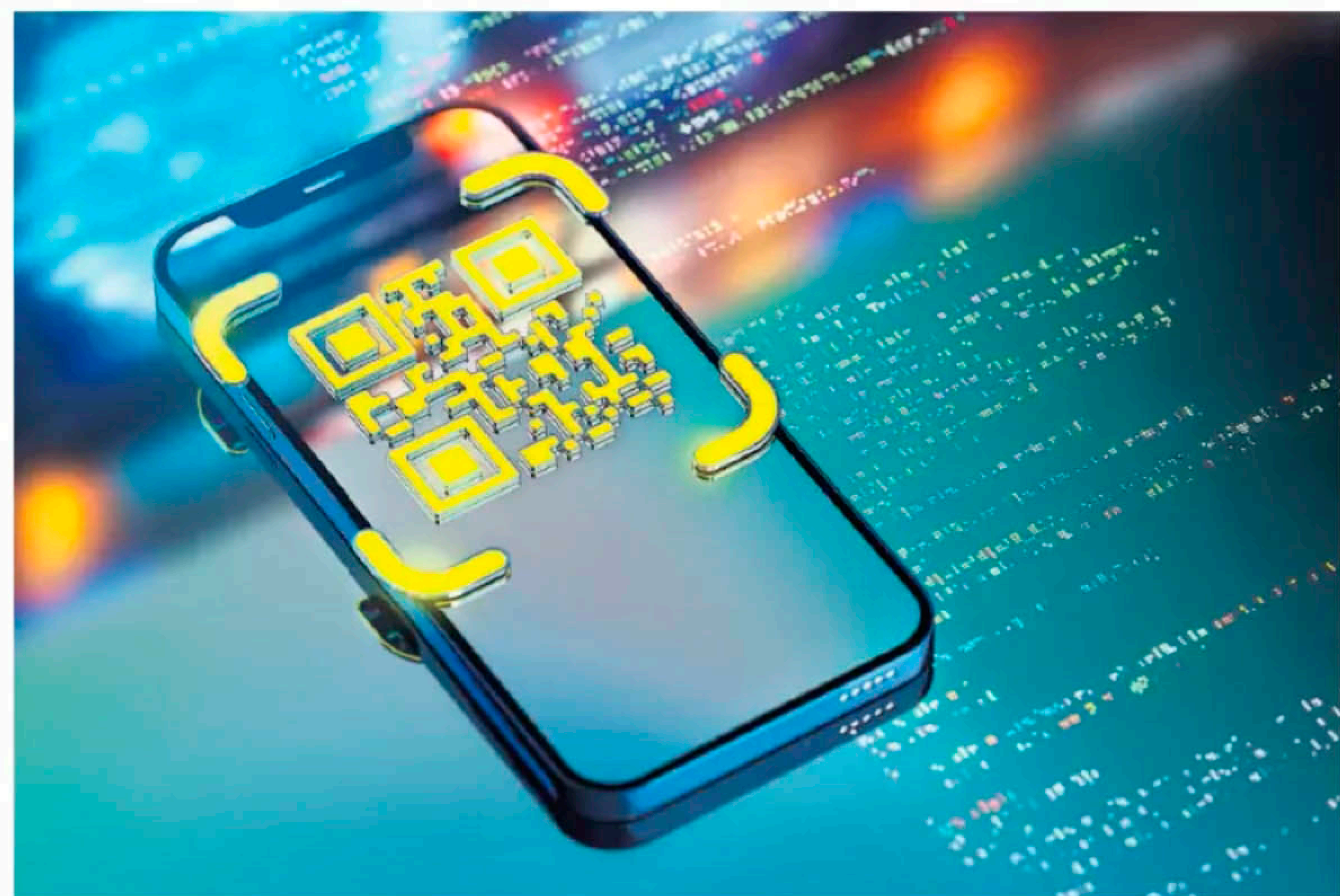
But they're a security nightmare. Anyone can create one: just go to a free online service such as QR Code Generator, type in the URL you want to have coded and – bingo! – there's your magic square for reproduction on a business card, company stationery, website, blog, whatever. And of course these creative opportunities are also available to bad actors, particularly scammers looking for a way of directing you to malevolent websites without having to post their dodgy URLs in plain sight.

Cybersecurity people have a term that denotes the target area for online crime: the "attack surface". The wildfire spread of QR codes means that the global attack surface has been expanded by several orders of magnitude. It's now, in effect, infinite.

Which probably explains why the US Federal Trade Commission has recently issued a consumer alert about the dangers of the technology. The alert does, naturally, mention the car parking scam, but focused more on those conducted via messaging systems. Examples include emails or texts containing a QR code accompanied by ostensibly plausible reasons why you may need to scan it. They couldn't deliver your package, perhaps, and you need to contact them to reschedule delivery. Or there's a problem with your account and you need to confirm your personal information. Or that some suspicious activity has been detected on your bank account, which means that you need to change your password. The key idea is to create a sense of urgency that the hapless victim will feel when they switch on their computer or smartphone first thing in the morning. Thus doth technology make suckers of us all.

What can be done about it? Not much, really, except to try to inculcate in users a healthy scepticism towards the codes. Many smartphones now enable you to preview the URL that is concealed in a particular code before scanning it. There's plenty of sensible consumer advice on YouTube and elsewhere: think before you scan; never scan QR codes that come in emails or junk snail mail; be wary of shortened URLs (Bitly, TinyURL et al) because they conceal the actual address; never, ever give bank information to online services – and so on. Common sense, basically.

Oh, and never forget the late Intel chief executive Andy Grove's celebrated injunction: in the digital world, only the paranoid survive.



*The US Federal Trade Commission has warned consumers about the dangers of QR technology. da-kuk/Getty; Graham Turner for the Guardian*

### What I'm reading

*John Naughton's recommendations*

**Take a letter**
If You're Z, Here's What You See is a remarkably perceptive essay about gen Z by Timothy Burke on his Eight by Seven newsletter on Substack.

**Film theory**
Daniel Kipnis's striking essay Poland's Zone of Interest in the online magazine Compact discusses Jonathan Glazer's Oscar-winning movie.

**War report**
Ukraine on the Ropes is a characteristically insightful report from Kyiv by Timothy Garton Ash (right) on his History of the Present Substack newsletter.



## Pop artist of the week

# Oh brother, where art thou?

**Kitty Empire**



**Liam Gallagher: Definitely Maybe 30th anniversary**
*Utility Arena, Cardiff*

*Noel may be absent, but so is the chaos of early Oasis, leaving Liam free to get the detail right in a volley of on-point anthems*

As a defining image, it's an unexpected choice: a sizeable portrait of Burt Bacharach sits in front of the drum riser, drawing the eye as a giant digital clock counts back the years to 1994. A songwriter of classic pop who died last year at age 94, the US artist seems an unlikely totem for a band – Oasis – whose general disdain for America, and surly investment in rock'n'roll, were core beliefs.

But Oasis guitarist Noel Gallagher brought a Bacharach album to the photo shoot for the cover of the band's debut album, *Definitely Maybe* (1994) – a photograph fondly recreated in spirit onstage tonight in an attempt to perk up this bland arena space. Flamingos, fake palm trees and a globe dot the decor, harking back to props from the shot taken in Paul "Bonehead" Arthurs' front room. Later, animated packets of Benson & Hedges fly around the backdrop during a merry rendition of LP curio Digsy's Dinner, along with cartoon goblets of red wine (Ribena in the photo shoot). Alongside the cigarettes and alcohol? Strobing pop art lasagne, as featured in the song's lyrics.

> *Rather than erasing his brother, Soviet-style, or hurling invective at him, Liam is in conciliatory mood*

Noel Gallagher is notably absent from these 30th anniversary celebrations – a kind of black hole around which everything carries on orbiting nonetheless. Oasis's songs are like perpetual motion machines, adopted by generation after generation as anthems of choice; they do not require their maker to shake them. They just need their singer, Liam Gallagher, to sneer them with conviction.

Noel's lyrics famously vacillate between certainty – "I'm free to say whatever" – and indecision – "maybe I just don't believe" – on *Definitely Maybe*. But Liam, clad in Adidas, delivers all of them with screwfaced commitment, singing upwards into a microphone perennially positioned to keep his physiotherapist in work. Bald men hug, pints fly, the stalls exchange paper-cup fire with the circle.

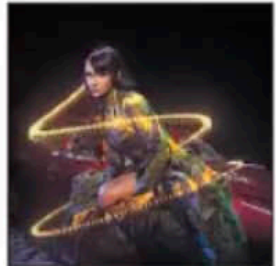
The two legendarily volatile Gallaghers remain at loggerheads since their split in 2009, with Noel refusing to participate in this retro lap of honour, despite the money on the table. Not only that: appetite for the 90s remains at fever pitch as music, fashion – and hopefully, soon, politics – look back at the decade many gen Z-ers and millennials identify as the last time there was any under-recorded, non-socially-mediated fun, or much hope for the future.

Discussing the anniversary tour with *Mojo* magazine earlier this year, Liam was quite happy to shoulder the burden of looking back. "Me, I love nostalgia," he said. "People say it's the comfort zone – I want to be in the comfort zone! Bring me my slippers and my little blankie and put me in the comfort zone, please. Life's stressful enough."

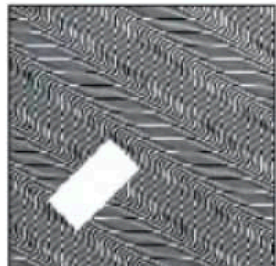
This tour is, arguably, no great conceptual stretch for him. A fair few Oasis songs litter Liam's outings of his very successful post-Beady Eye solo material. So when the night's revelries begin with Rock'n'Roll Star, there is a certain air of business as usual – the track habitually kicks off Liam's solo sets.

Oasis rhythm guitarist Bonehead also tours with Liam; he's here

# Hot tracks



**Kehlani**
*Next 2 U*
A slinky, impassioned track from the Californian R&B star; their fourth album, *Crash*, is out later this month.



**Jamie xx**
*Treat Each Other Right*
A multi-part, two-step house monster complete with powerful messaging, heralding an LP in September.




**Manu Chao**
*Viva Tu*
The legendary Latin folk-rocker breaks his silence with a typically vivacious celebration of everyone.

*'Screwfaced commitment': Liam Gallagher on stage at Cardiff's Utility Arena. Karen Robinson for the Observer*

tonight, looking professorial in wire specs. It makes sense: Bonehead's band, the Rain – featuring Liam Gallagher on vocals – morphed into Oasis when Liam persuaded his elder brother to come along and jam.

Rock'n'roll was, of course, always key to Oasis's USP. Their manager, Marcus Russell, initially baulked at the band being lumped in with Britpop, pulling the band's product from record shop promotions that included fey southerners Blur and Suede.

In addition to Liam, the loud electric guitars are the night's star turn. There are three: Bonehead's, Mike Moore's and Jay Mehler's, creating resonant, pile-driving approximations of Indian ragas layered over with tunes that milk-deliverers could whistle, and still do. The less familiar songs – such as Cloudburst, or I Will Believe – are instantly located in time and space thanks to the mantric glam drones at their hearts.

Deep cuts aside, there are few real surprises tonight. Liam Gallagher's is a well-oiled, professionally run operation, with none of the band's 1994 chaos about it. Backing vocalists and string sections rotate on the rear podium.

The lack of eventfulness makes you appreciate the detail more. Rather than erasing his brother, Soviet-style, or hurling invective at him ("sad little dwarf" and "angry squirt" were two standouts from 2022), Liam is in conciliatory mood.

Snapshots of the pair in their pomp litter the visuals. Liam pulls an ancient Oasis obscurity from the vault: Lock All the Doors, an Oasis demo, never released but later recorded by Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds. The prominence of the image of Bacharach feels like another gesture towards the absent Gallagher.

Oasis ultras may demur, but the most emotive few minutes of the set come early. Liam dedicates a track to his "little brother" who's "playing hard to get". Yes, hits like Cigarettes and Alcohol, Supersonic and Live Forever are all defiantly on point, railing against the pointlessness of unrewarding work and the nihilism of grunge, and celebrating the consolation found in altered states. But Liam's rendition of Half the World Away – traditionally sung by Noel, and sweetened by violins – comes over like a thoughtful ode to the distance between them.

*Liam Gallagher/Definitely Maybe 30th Anniversary tours the UK until 25 August*

# Albums









## Tems
*Born in the Wild (RCA)*

Temilade Openiyi's three-year rise from Lagos buzz to international contender has been vertiginous. The vocalist/producer has already scored one Grammy, plus further Grammy and Oscar nominations for her work with Future, Beyoncé and Rihanna.

After two well-received EPs, Tems's debut album drops with 18-track swagger and a tiny handful of guests – the most extraordinary among them Lauryn Hill, on the standout T-Unit. *Born in the Wild* runs a little long, but it makes good on Tems's early promise as a thoughtful writer who retains her voice and Nigerian aesthetic – alté, Afrobeats – while feeling right at home in US soul/R&B.

The album is divided between songs about relationships and tracks about making her way in the world. We hear pep talks from her mother and managers (two interludes), and wry or righteous takedowns of partners who have not made the grade (Unfortunate, the stripped-back Boy O Boy). The bangers, though, are even better. Following on from the previously released Me & U and Love Me Je Je, Wickedest is a flex that prominently samples the pan-African 1999 banger Magic System's 1er Gaou. The assured Turn Me Up feels like a hit-in-waiting, and not an unreasonable instruction from an artist levelling up in style. **Kitty Empire**

## Kaytranada
*Timeless*
*(RCA)*

Canadian producer and DJ Kaytranada has spent the past decade perfecting the art of the bounce. Since his dancefloor-focused rework of Janet Jackson's 1993 track If went viral in 2013, Kaytranada – real name Louis Celestin – has released three albums characterised by a rhythmic swing that lands between the beats to produce an infectious swagger. After 2023's funk-fuelled collaborative record with rapper Aminé, Celestin's latest solo album is a 21-track odyssey through the cornerstones of his club-ready style. Almost every song boasts a guest, from singer Tinashe to bassist Thundercat, but rather than overwhelming Celestin's sound, his collaborators find space within his productions. Rapper Channel Tres weaves his baritone growl amid bass-shaking breakbeat rhythms on Drip Sweat, for instance, while singer Charlotte Day Wilson soars soulfully over Celestin's chopped melodic samples on Still.

With so many tracks, the album can feel overstuffed, especially with several tonally similar R&B tunes. Yet, the highlights ultimately outweigh the filler. On Dance Dance Dance Dance Celestin reaches the apex of his swing, interspersing horn fanfares with piano stabs to create a modern house classic guaranteed to make you move. **Ammar Kalia**

## Peggy Gou
*I Hear You*
*(XL)*

Korean DJ-producer Peggy Gou is one of the most successful women in her field. She's about to headline a huge outdoor party in London and reckons she's played to a million fans in the past year. As often in the dance industry, success precedes suspicion: Gou's first break came when a promoter saw her photo rather than heard her DJ; she's into fashion as much as music; her songs often rehash club classics. These things are all true, but they don't much matter; *I Hear You* is a sparkling introduction to Gou's eclectic "K-house" sound.

All corners of 90s dancefloors are scoured for inspiration. Back to One and 1+1=11 could be vintage Strictly Rhythm tracks, while slivers of mellow techno, piano house and even Renegade Soundwave pop up, as well as that earworm interpolation of 9pm (Till I Come) during huge crossover hit (It Goes Like) Nanana. Gou deftly creates irrepressible music equally suited to tiny basements, Bluetooth speakers or Berghain's Panorama bar, the Berlin nightspot where she gained so much of her clubbing education. The oldest track might be the best though – I Go is classic Balearic to its sun-bleached bones. **Damien Morris**

## The Zawose Queens
*Maisha*
*(Real World)*

Musical dynasties loom large in African music, in Tanzania no less than Mali, but it's taken a while for the offspring of Hukwe Zawose to claim his legacy. The late patriarch championed national traditions while winning favour in the west in the 80s and 90s, cutting albums for Real World and becoming a fixture at Womad. The mesmeric chime of the thumb piano (*illimba*) was at the heart of his music, along with the exuberant vocals of the Wagogo (or Gogo) people of the central hills.

Here, Hukwe's daughter, Pendo, and granddaughter, Leah, pick up his mantle on an album made with British producers Oli Barton-Wood and Tom Excell, who add guitar and studio effects to the mix. The sheer vocal power of the duo is arresting, a shifting polyphony primarily addressing family and domestic affairs; this is the first time women in Gogo music have been allowed to write their own stories. There's a powerful rhythmic drive to tracks like Maisha and Kuseka – aunt and niece prove fiercesome drummers – while on Sauti Ya Mama and Fahari Yetu, recorded on the roof of a Zanzibar hotel, the production turns dreamy and hypnotic under the cascades of thumb piano. Stirring stuff. **Neil Spencer**

# One to watch



## Tiny Habits

*The American folk-pop trio have gained famous fans with their soaring harmonies and confessional lyrics*

When Berklee College of Music students Cinya Khan, Maya Rae and Judah Mayowa first bonded over karaoke in their dormitory, it was the raw confessionalism of artists such as Kacey Musgraves that cemented their friendship. In no time, they were channelling that same sincerity to belt out TikTok covers from their stairwell.

Transcendent, soul-baring harmonies have dominated their sound ever since, with twinkling, fingerpicked guitar and piano chords, and lyrics that explore the fragility of being human. As their song Mudroom puts it: "There are people that I don't wanna end up like / But we're all sequels to our parents' lives." On their debut album, *All for Something*, they dish out hard-won wisdom, whispered confidences and occasional gut-wrenching regret. In an Instagram post, Khan admitted nearly ditching the single Wishes but a sudden epiphany that "honesty will always be original" rescued the song from limbo.

Tiny Habits are a tightly knit trio who write democratically, their verses weaving together as seamlessly as their vocals, which evoke porch swings at dusk and childhood video games. Their penchant for introspection has won them praise from the likes of Elton John, who called them "delicious", the late David Crosby, and Musgraves herself, who earlier this year joined them backstage at a gig to sing her song Too Good to Be True. **Orla Foster**

*All for Something is out now*

# Film

*BELOW 'A rocky romance': Viggo Mortensen and Vicky Krieps in The Dead Don't Hurt. Alamy*

## Film of the week

# Woman of the west

**Wendy Ide**



**The Dead Don't Hurt**
*(129 mins, 15) Directed by Viggo Mortensen; starring Vicky Krieps, Viggo Mortensen, Solly McLeod*

*Viggo Mortensen's second directorial outing is a quirky spin on the western genre given true grit by a magnetic performance from Vicky Krieps*

On the surface, *The Dead Don't Hurt*, the second directorial venture from Viggo Mortensen (who also stars, writes, produces and composed the film's elegantly pensive score), has the weathered, leathery look of a traditional Hollywood western. The story of a rocky romance between a spirited, rebellious woman and a strong, silent man, the film was shot, in imposing widescreen, largely on location in Durango, Mexico, a region that also provided the backdrop for numerous classics of the genre. John Sturges's *The Magnificent Seven*, Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* and *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* and Sergio Leone's *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* all made use of the wide open sky, sweeping vistas and photogenically phallic geological formations. There's a rough-hewn drama to the look of the land, with jutting rocky outcrops contrasted against the squat, wind-blown vegetation of the scrubland. But scratch below the dust and the grit of what passes here for 1860s Nevada and Mortensen's film reveals itself to be a quietly unconventional spin on this time-worn genre.

In a way, it's a film that reflects the personality and creative approach of its director. Mortensen, after all, has a classic movie star bearing and bone structure that was put to striking effect as Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings*. But his career choices subsequently have tended towards the intriguing and the offbeat – for every crowd-pleaser such as *Green Book*, there is a clutch of abrasive, challenging roles in pictures by film-makers such as David Cronenberg. It stands to reason that Mortensen's interpretation of a western would venture somewhat off the beaten track.

At the centre of the film is a love story between two independent people who have both grasped the possibilities of the American west fiercely and on their own terms. Mortensen plays Danish immigrant Holger Olsen, a taciturn man who has clearly lived several full lives already, even before he settled in a modest shack on the outskirts of Elk Flats, Nevada. On a visit to San Francisco ("to see the end of the world"), Olsen encounters Vivienne (Vicky Krieps), a flower seller whose patience with her foppish blowhard of a suitor has reached breaking point. "Cretin!", she exclaims in exasperation. Watching her from the city's dock, Olsen is immediately fascinated.

And who can blame him? Krieps is terrific; her Vivienne has a rebellious spirit, a wicked sense of mischief and a love of beauty, qualities that set her some way apart from the ground-down, dentally challenged frontier folk in Olsen's town. The daughter of French-speaking settlers, Vivienne grew up surrounded by trees and her mother's romantic stories in the redwood forests near the border with Canada. She makes no secret of her disappointment in Olsen's living arrangements. "So sad! No trees," she sighs. "You live like a dog." She stays, however, and softens the hard edges of Olsen's primitive living arrangements with roses and bougainvillaea outside, and fabrics and furnishings within. The idyll is short-lived however. With the outbreak of the civil war, former soldier Olsen feels obliged to fight once again. And fate, in the form of the wayward son of the local rancher, has its own plans for Vivienne.

There's a kinship in the storytelling rhythms and intimate character details between this picture and revisionist westerns such as Kelly Reichardt's *Meek's Cutoff*. The languid pacing (the film is sometimes a little too ambling and unhurried for its own good) and fractured, nonlinear structure chime with Mortensen's arthouse sensibilities, rather than the more traditional view of what a frontier adventure should look like. And by shaping this portrait of the untamed American west through the experiences of first and second-



*The languid pacing and fractured, nonlinear structure chime with Mortensen's arthouse sensibilities*

generation immigrants, Mortensen plays with the all-American identity of a certain breed of mythic western (the kind that tended to star John Wayne, and which colour-coded its heroes with white hats and white skin).

Cinematographer Marcel Zyskind works wonders with the savage beauty of the landscape and the bristling tensions of the local saloon. And the sound design is rich and busy – the quiet that drew Olsen to his isolated corner of the world is never actually silent: there's a constant chorus of insects and birds, all accompanied by the fickle whims of the weather. But for all this, the film is only fully alive when Vivienne is on screen. And this is a potential problem. It's not a spoiler, since the film opens at her deathbed, but much of the action deals with Olsen's muted struggle to balance his grief at the loss of his love against his desire for revenge against the man who wronged her.

The film's structure is a partial solution – Olsen's journey after her death is cut together with Vivienne's story, her wits and her will parried against the hostile machismo of the frontier. But it's telling that we only really notice the film's deliberate pacing and dips in energy in the scenes that lack Krieps's galvanising and magnetic presence.

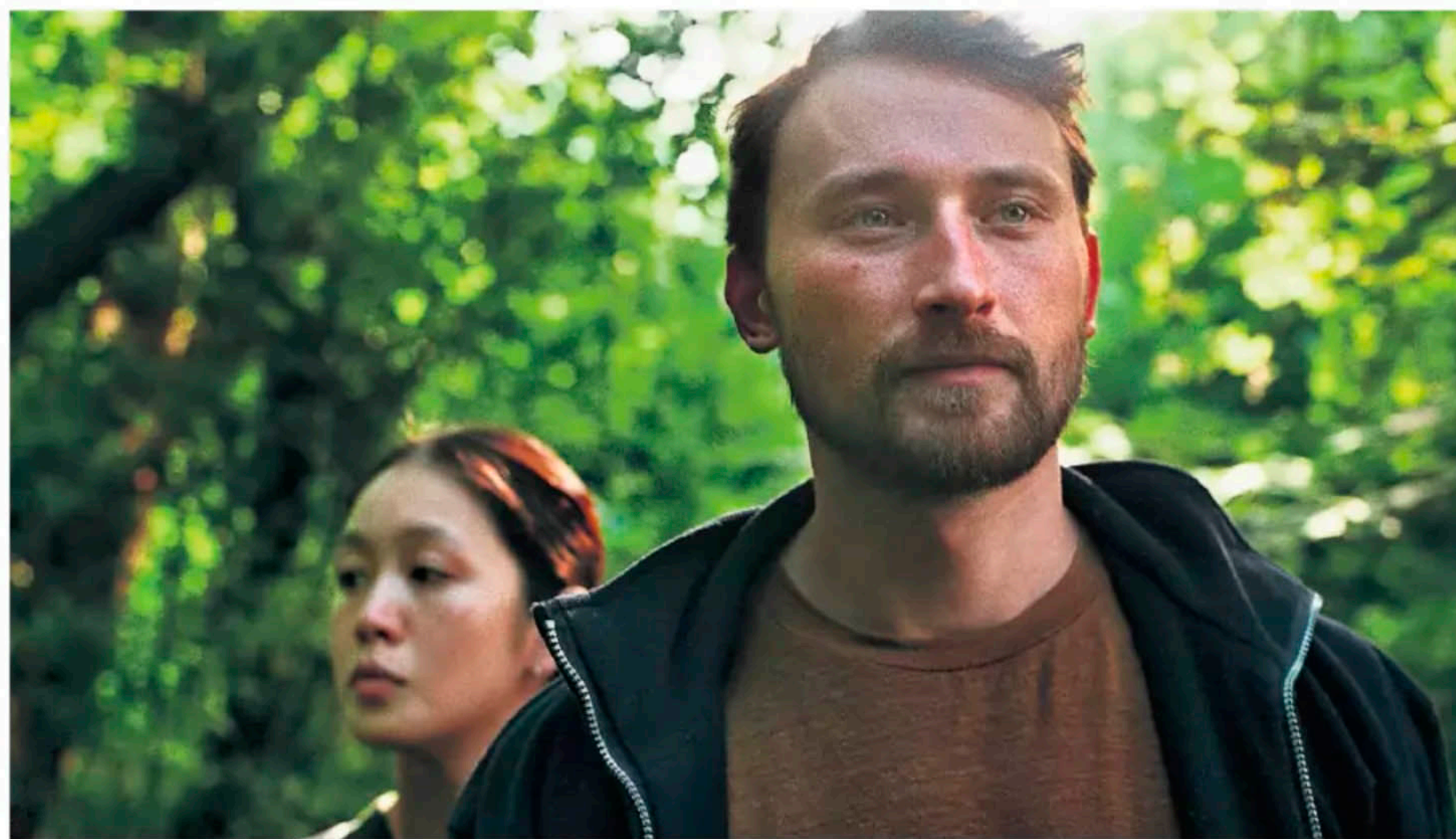
# And the rest… by Wendy Ide

## Here

*(84 mins, PG) Directed by Bas Devos; starring Stefan Gota, Liyo Gong, Teodor Corban*

The lovely, low-key films of the Belgian director Bas Devos have deservedly gathered an appreciative following on the festival circuit. With his 2019 picture *Ghost Tropic,* which follows a cleaner who falls asleep on the last train, and now *Here*, which finds human connections through soup-making and the study of tiny, insignificant plants, Devos has always encouraged his audience to look at the city of Brussels with fresh eyes, to see the details that might otherwise be overlooked. By making one of the central characters in *Here*, a Belgian-Chinese woman named Shuxiu (Liyo Gong), a bryologist – a specialist in mosses who finds endless worlds of fascination in something that most people barely notice – Devos weaves into the picture a neat metaphor for the intimacy and curiosity of his own film-making.

As with *Ghost Tropic*, *Here* views Brussels from the perspective of someone who has made a life in the city but is still some way from calling it home. Labourer Stefan (Stefan Gota) is preparing to visit his mother in Romania for an extended holiday, or perhaps longer. Before he leaves, Stefan cooks up the contents of his fridge into batches of soup to share with friends, striding through the city in his shorts to deliver his Tupperware care packages. It's an exquisitely economical way to establish the decency and generosity of a character. Two chance encounters with Shuxiu, first in a takeaway, and later in a tranquil woodland, hint at the possibility of a relationship. Nothing is overtly stated – this is a Bas Devos film after all. But the details – a small gift (of soup, what else?) and the private smile that greets it – speak volumes.







KRIS DEWITTE, SONY PICTURES, ©2023 TRESOR FILMS/ GAUMONT/ LDRPII/ ARTEMIS, ICON FILM CHANNEL

*FROM TOP Liyo Gong and Stefan Gota in Bas Devos's 'lovely, intimate' Here; Will Smith and Martin Lawrence in the 'laboured and stale' Bad Boys: Ride Or Die; Nadia Tereszkiewicz in Rosalie.*

*BELOW Dakota Fanning in The Watched.*

## Bad Boys: Ride or Die

*(115 mins, 15) Directed by Adil El Arbi, Bilall Fallah; starring Will Smith, Martin Lawrence, Jacob Scipio*

The knock-on effect from last year's Hollywood strikes is that showy, tent-pole studio releases are thin on the ground this year. Cinemas will no doubt be hoping that audiences starved of big, dumb, trigger-happy action spectacles will find their appetites sated by *Bad Boys: Ride or Die,* the fourth film in the high-octane maverick cop buddy movie franchise, starring Will Smith and Martin Lawrence. It certainly delivers on the key basic requirements for popcorn escapism: it's directed with such brash flamboyance, it seems as though every other shot is a vehicle exploding, a sweeping drone shot of shimmering, sinful Miami, or a slo-mo clip of bikini-clad babes playing beach volleyball.

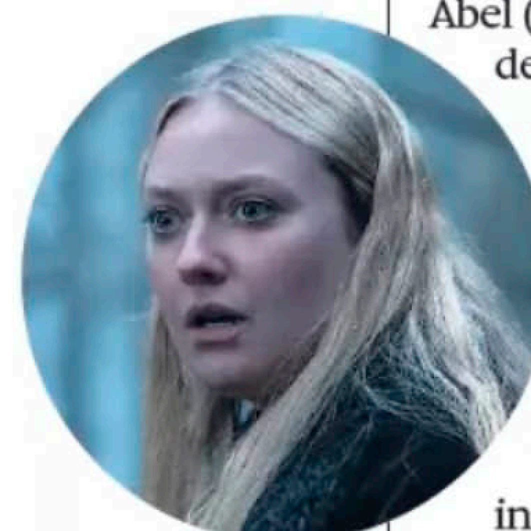
The action sequences are splashily implausible and executed with scant regard for the risk of collateral damage. And if it's not entirely braindead, let's just say that this is not a mentally taxing viewing experience either. And if the bullets mainly find their targets, the jokes do not. The comic chemistry between Smith and Lawrence – at least as important to the appeal of the original films as the flashy cars and body count – now feels laboured and stale.

## Rosalie

*(115 mins, 15) Directed by Stéphanie Di Giusto; starring Nadia Tereszkiewicz, Benoît Magimel, Benjamin Biolay*

Based loosely on a true story, this handsome, inoffensively bland, French-language period drama unfolds in rural Brittany in the 1870s, a grimly conservative place where difference of any kind is treated with suspicion and revulsion.

Rosalie (Nadia Tereszkiewicz) knows this only too well. She was born with a rare condition which means that her face and body are covered in hair. She has concealed it from the world, with a diligent shaving routine and high-necked blouses. But when she marries Abel (Benoît Magimel), a grumpy, debt-ridden bar owner more interested in the dowry than his new wife, Rosalie somehow grows confident enough to reveal her true self. And for a while at least, she is embraced by the community. But the *Edward Scissorhands* plot trajectory is inevitable, and the fickle locals soon turn against her. It's watchable enough, but a cursory screenplay lets the film down, and Rosalie's arc from shaven shame to hairy defiance never fully persuades.



## Riddle of Fire

*(115 mins, 12A) Directed by Weston Razooli; starring Phoebe Ferro, Charlie Stover, Skyler Peters*

Rarely has a fairly mediocre film excited me to this extent about the director's future projects. *Riddle of Fire* is an 80s-style retro kids adventure which pits a trio of paintball-happy scamps against a shady group of occult and taxidermy dabbling adults. Shot on Super 16, the film has an appealing, slightly washed-out look, like hand-me-down T-shirts and threadbare denim. But it's way too long, the pacing is sloppy and the acting is frequently (perhaps deliberately) atrocious. The plot, weaving together medieval themes with the quest for pie ingredients, is incoherent, as is much of the dialogue. Still, there's something here – a kernel of *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* magic. This is the work of a film-maker whose skill doesn't yet match his bold vision. But with more experience, we could see great things from US writer/director Razooli.

## The Watched

*(102 mins, 15) Directed by Ishana Shyamalan; starring Dakota Fanning, Georgina Campbell, Olwen Fouéré*

A cursed forest in the west of Ireland is the setting for the feature-directing debut of Ishana Shyamalan, daughter of M Night. Dakota Fanning stars as a young American who finds herself trapped, with a band of desperate strangers, deep in the woods inhabited by ancient, vengeful entities that view the humans as light entertainment. Judging by this uneven folk horror, Shyamalan shares with her father a knack for crafting atmosphere; the sound design, in particular, is creepily oppressive, all cracking inhuman bones and scratching unseen claws. But she also demonstrates the family trait of leaning on inelegant exposition and third-act plot ambushes.

# Art

# Those daring young women

**Critic of the year**
**Laura Cumming**



**Discover Degas and Miss La La**
*National Gallery, London WC2; until 1 September*

**Nan Goldin: Sisters, Saints, Sibyls**
*Gagosian Open, 83 Charing Cross Road, London WC2; until 23 June*

*Degas's masterpiece gives up its secrets in a fascinating show, while Nan Goldin pays powerful tribute to her sister, who took her own life at 18*

What can an image really tell us of a person? Two new shows turn upon that evergreen question. The National Gallery's latest exhibition is ostensibly about one of Degas's most famous subjects, **Miss La La**, Paris circus star, drawn and painted by him many times but to exactly what effect? Nan Goldin's convulsive memorial to her dead sister, meanwhile questions the very truthfulness of photographs.

*Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando*, Degas's breathtaking 1879 masterpiece, looks entirely spontaneous. Here is the celebrated acrobat dangling high above the unseen crowd, satin costume flickering lilac in the limelight, arms outstretched like a dancer. She is suspended from a rope held through the sheer iron-jaw strength of her teeth. This spectacular performance is matched by the daring of Degas's composition, as if he too was somewhere up there, just below the soles of her silky shoes, hanging mid-air in the moment. You would scarcely think this was the work of many days sketching at the circus and painting in the studio. Degas even hired an architectural draughtsman to elucidate the principles of the Cirque Fernando dome.

But is it useful to know all this? Most of the many sketches, pastels and paintings are on show at the National Gallery, in an exemplary presentation of Degas's thinking and method (accompanied by a superb catalogue). We learn that Miss La La – born Anna Albertine Olga Brown in what is now Poland in 1858 to a German-Russian mother and an African American father – actually came to Degas's studio to pose. There are changes of costume, colour and position. The curators have established the time taken to make the finished masterpiece – not more than four months.

Her silvery shoes: what colour were they really? Consult Renoir's portrait of two young Cirque Fernando acrobats, alongside, and you discover that the slippers were actually gold. And that her shining costume – lilac against the terracotta and pistachio dome – was in reality white. Degas is painting the ever-changing effects of light, to be sure, but what you are really learning is what you already knew – that art is *art*.

Seurat, Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso and Braque were among the many other artists to paint the Cirque. It was not the least of the management's genius to invite them to afternoon rehearsals. The National Gallery has paintings of English circuses too – Duncan Grant's lavender-coloured elephant flailing round the big top; Sickert's tiny trapeze artist lost in the highwire stratosphere, in homage to his friend Degas; Sickert's (third) wife Thérèse Lessore, painting a trio of acrobats on swings, repeated as shadows in a circular spotlight.

But neither circuses, nor Degas, are entirely the point. The show really wants to introduce us to Miss La La, one of only two black subjects in his art. There is coat-trailing talk of Degas's white Creole mother, his youthful trip to New Orleans, the black people he might have seen

*'Breathtaking': Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando, 1879, by Degas.National Gallery, London*




*An 1880 poster advertising Olga Brown. National Library of France, Paris*





there (but never painted). And there is Olga Brown herself.

And the ultimate gift she brings to this show is the admission to the National Gallery of enthralling period photographs. Here she is in daguerreotype, carte-de-visite, albumen silver print and even, c1938, a grid of passport-style shots. It could be a concise history of early photography, and more. She's in fringed costume and tights, but also in crinoline, feathered trilby, 1930s crepe suit. She is solo, her exceptional strength and agility prefiguring those of an Olympic gymnast; she poses with her African American husband and daughter. She is a model of intense professionalism, poise and dignity.

The sight of Olga Brown, in person, is far more powerful than Degas's images. But the artist is not painting her portrait. Her face is no more visible than her personality in these scenes, even though you have to look up to her, sky-high among the gilded curlicues, dark windows and bright air: the point is not the woman but the vision of her staggering feat.

It would be hard to think of a better place to show Nan Goldin's exceptionally moving tribute to her sister Barbara (1946-65) than in the old Welsh Chapel and former Limelight Club at 83 Charing Cross Road. A slideshow of photographs, perfectly choreographed on three screens, and in three acts, with narration by Goldin and a soundtrack that runs from choral music to Johnny Cash and Nick Cave, **Sisters, Saints and Sibyls** moves between oratorio, disquisition and thrumming, out-of-your head darkness.

Its first act tells the appallingly short life of Barbara, drawing analogies between the American girl and her early Christian namesake, Saint Barbara, both of them locked away by a parent (hence the allusive triptych). But where Barbara was tortured for her faith by a pagan father, Goldin's sister was repeatedly

*ABOVE LEFT* ***Circus star Miss La La or Olga Brown, centre, on a contemporary postcard.*** *© Mucem, Marseille*

*ABOVE RIGHT* ***A photograph of Nan Goldin's sister, Barbara (on the left), late 1950s.*** *© Nan Goldin, courtesy the artist and Gagosian*

> *Goldin's sister was repeatedly institutionalised by her mother, for what, exactly?*

institutionalised by her mother, for what, exactly? Liking boys, liking girls, cutting her arms, anxiety, late hours, rebelling against a woman who wanted a "normal" daughter? Nobody watching this now could fail to recognise – in tears, for me – a whole generation of teenage girls.

Family photographs show many perfect Barbaras, trying hard to please the camera, until they fade out as she turns 13, to be replaced with bleak wards and hospital facilities. These will have exact counterparts in the second act, as Nan Goldin goes in and out of rehab, relapsing over and again in the New York of her photographs, a demimonde of beautiful clubbers, performers and junkies. Shots of a train line show the spot where Barbara – who told a doctor she no longer had a home – killed herself at the age of 18.

The solitude, even in a throng, that pervades Goldin's own photographs is there in those early images of Barbara. Medical reports describe her as "an attractive, extremely intense young female", and there are suggestions that Nan may go the same way. But their stories do not converge, or at least Goldin does not examine them except through this echoing of images. Nor does she seem to question the sentimental photograph, clearly taken by her mother, of the family gathered around Barbara's grave.

Goldin's characteristic self-exposure, sometimes running to narcissism, finds a true and tragic purpose in this memorial to Barbara. Never has Johnny Cash's cover of the Nine Inch Nails song Hurt seemed more like an agonising farewell; never have playground photographs seemed quite so poignant. Goldin has found a way of turning still images into something like a cinematic portrait, its nearly overwhelming power leavened by her own flat intonation, especially of one doctor's words: "It is Mrs Goldin who should be in the hospital."

# Dance & Games

## The Sarasota Ballet
*Linbury theatre, Royal Opera House*

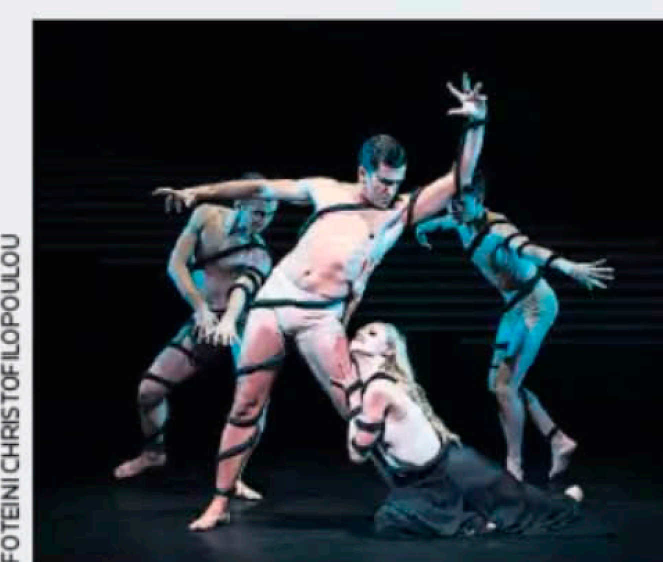
For an art form obsessed with tradition, ballet is surprisingly bad at preserving its own history. Works drop out of the repertoire and are never seen again. Context is lost. Lovers of Frederick Ashton therefore owe the Sarasota Ballet and its director, Iain Webb, a former dancer with Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet, a great debt for its loving preservation of his work. Since Webb arrived at the company in 2007, he and his assistant director and wife, Margaret Barbieri, have carefully revived many rarely seen pieces.

The Florida company's triple bill is a perfect way to kick off Ashton Celebrated, a Royal Ballet mini-season devoted to its founding choreographer. The revelation was *Dante Sonata*, which sends 22 dancers flooding across the tiny stage in movement at once uninhibited and highly sculptural. Designed by Sophia Fedorovitch and set to Liszt as arranged by Constant Lambert, it was premiered in 1940 at a point when the future of the world seemed in doubt.

It sets the forces of the Children of Light and the Children of Darkness opposite one another in expressive choreography full of moments of anguish but poses of calm resolve that reaches back to Isadora Duncan (whom Ashton saw when he was a ballet-obsessed teenager) and forward to Pina Bausch (whose mentor, Kurt Jooss, was also working in Britain through the war). The steps – women rushing, hair loose, squared elbows pumping against the air – are astonishing, but so is the emotion. It may be a period piece, but it is utterly alive.

Ashton's velocity and intricacy and Fedorovitch's genius are also on display in *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* from 1947, a swooning rose-tinged tapestry for four couples to Ravel, full of anticipation and a hint of mystery. *Sinfonietta* from 1967 shows Ashton the modernist, constantly inventive, moving a woman among five men like a hypnotised acrobat, setting couples springing and bouncing in radiant lightness, in perfect synchronicity with Malcolm Williamson's score.

The whole programme, danced with grace and care, is a history lesson and a delight. **Sarah Crompton**



FOTEINI CHRISTOFILOPOULOU

*'Utterly alive': Sarasota Ballet.*



SHARED MEMORY

## Animal Well
*Billy Basso; Bigmode; PC, PlayStation, Switch*

The dark aperture of a well has always been an alluring focus of human fascination. Giver of life-sustaining water, it is also seen as a portal to a warren of risky secrets; our fables are littered with wailing children whose curiosity got the better of them, consigned to an eternity of damp gazing up toward the distant, unreachable circle of light. *Animal Well*, an indie game seven years in the making, sends us down into one of these twilight labyrinths, a cave system of incessant dripping and darting creatures whose fur is tinged with luminescence. The goals are unstated but obvious: explore, map, emerge. It is a quest that soon becomes an obsession.

You play as an amorphous blob – hardly the most aspirational cipher – but what you lack in, say, limbs, you make up for in pluck and inventiveness. To begin with you can only bravely leap between rocks and platforms. But in time you gain new tools, gadgets and abilities that enable you to access previously unreachable passageways and tunnels. As you quest deeper into the cave system, your map fills in, inch by inch.

Dangling bulbs which sway in the subterranean breeze provide the light to describe your surroundings, but you'll need to peer closely at each scene to notice the semi-submerged gears, pulleys and levers that open the world. As much as *Animal Well* is about exploration, it's a game built from puzzles and secrets, in which your ingenuity is called to match that of its designer. And it's in those moments when you happen upon the solution, and everything clicks into place, and the world creaks open a little wider, letting you dive a little deeper, that *Animal Well* excels.

At a time when the big video game companies are focused on building video games designed to function like sport, with seasons and passes and never-ending fixtures designed to dominate your leisure time, what a joy to be presented with a game that is so intricate and contained. This is a perfectly made contraption, with a start, a middle and an end, intended to inspire joy and build culture, and not, mercifully, shareholder value. **Simon Parkin**

Critics

# Classical

# All brio and ballistic B-flats


'Also a subtle actor': Jonas Kaufmann in the title role, with Sonia Radvanovsky as Maddalena, in *Andrea Chénier*. Marc Brenner



Peter Conrad

**Andrea Chénier**
*Royal Opera House, London*
**The Barber of Seville**
*Opera Holland Park, London*

*Antonio Pappano bows out with a blazing performance of Giordano's red-blooded opera, while a fine cast brings out the vitality of Rossini's classic in spite of the weather*

When I interviewed Antonio Pappano in Rome in 2011, he jokingly admitted to being a bit of a cultural traitor. "I've done productions of Wagner, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Britten and Birtwistle at Covent Garden," he said, "but maybe not as many of the Italian classics as they expected me to." During his second decade as music director of the Royal Opera he made amends, with new productions of works by Bellini, Rossini, Verdi and Puccini, and now he bows out with a revival of Giordano's red-bloodedly Italianate **Andrea Chénier**, which he conducts with both stormy energy and tender empathy, abetted by three singers who provide their own firework display of ballistic B-flats and blazing high Cs.

The characters are operatic archetypes, ricocheting between heaven and earth, metaphysical rapture and convulsive despair. Chénier, a poet guillotined in 1794 during the Terror, is here a grandstanding tenor whose role mostly consists of lyrical tirades which he claims to be improvising on the spot. His soprano partner, the aristocratic Maddalena, writes him anonymous letters which are unsung arias, then consummates their abstract affair by sacrificially joining him on the scaffold. The doctrinaire Gérard occupies a lower terrain, specialising in baleful rages that suit the baritone's vocal register. The drop cloth in David McVicar's 2015 production quotes Robespierre's justification for executing Chénier: Plato, it declares, also banished poets from his republic. Here, however, it is these obsessively impassioned, high-flying opera singers who question the revolution's egalitarian creed and have to be eliminated.

Chénier's first aria, in which he denounces the ancien regime at a rococo party, presents such a perilous vocal challenge that once at Covent Garden I saw Plácido Domingo open his mouth to begin it and then abruptly stalk offstage. The curtain flopped down, a panicked call was put out for a doctor in the house, then after 20 tense minutes Domingo returned, having suffered – we were informed – a spasm of indigestion, not nervous qualms about the imminent high notes. After cancellations in two previous seasons, Jonas Kaufmann on this occasion stands his ground and thrillingly hurls out defiance, with some refined diminuendos to vouch for the character's poetic finesse. Kaufmann is also a subtle actor, whose responses always seem to beg for a closeup: see for yourself when the production is relayed to cinemas onTuesday.

In a typically telling detail, Kaufmann's Chénier falters on his way to the tumbril in the opera's last triumphal bars, stumbles, and is raised up and conducted to a heroic death by Sondra Radvanovsky's stalwart Maddalena. Radvanovsky is always best when most imperious, for instance as Donizetti's Elizabeth I in *Roberto Devereux*, or the sorceress in Cherubini's *Medea*; here her voice ignites at the revolutionary tribunal where Chénier is condemned, and she ends the scene with a wild but precisely tuned shriek of protest. Gérard is Amartuvshin Enkhbat from Mongolia, a stolid actor but a stunning vocalist, whose lament about his lapse from political rectitude to sensual rapacity prompts an ovation halfway through. Enkhbat has a star's expectation of deference, and after his agonised outcry he staidly retreats to his desk in the courtroom and waits for a stagehand costumed as a lackey to bring him a glass of water, with which he moistens his throat for the next stentorian solo. He deserves the refreshment: Italian opera is sport as well as art, and this is a championship match.

> *Italian opera is sport as well as art, and this is a championship match*

Rossini's **The Barber of Seville** shows off a jauntier version of the Italian operatic temperament, made audible by Figaro who arrives to open his barber shop bellowing "Lalalalera", a string of nonsensical syllables that are synonyms for enjoyment. At Opera Holland Park, conductor Charlotte Corderoy uses the clamorous overture to wake up a town whose residents slump in the streets recovering from last night's revels. Waiters bustle about collecting empties from cafe tables, fruitsellers attuned to an orchestral crescendo play juggling games with Seville's famous oranges, and on his way to work Figaro pauses to titivate the hair of unkempt audience members seated on the aisle.


'A frenzy of rebellious desire': Heather Lowe's Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*.

Cecilia Stinton's production turns Dr Bartolo and his ward, Rosina, into Victorian tourists, respectively dismayed and elated by the torrid south. He is a fusty academic with a flaming case of sunburn who loyally salutes a portrait of the matronly old queen, which he has brought with him on holiday. She frets to cast off corseted restrictions and is excitingly flustered when a local exhibitionist unbuttons his clothes to cool off in a fountain and preens for her delectation. Almaviva, wooing her, adds some pelvic thrusts to the early morning serenade he sings outside her hotel. Equally avid, she beckons him to a sofa for sex before their planned elopement at the end of the opera. In a fine cast, Heather Lowe's Rosina is outstanding, fearlessly tossing off coloratura flourishes while she dashes about in a frenzy of rebellious desire.

Holland Park last Tuesday was damp and cold, but it takes more than dour English weather to douse the manic vitality of Rossini. This new *Barber of Seville* exudes brio and bravura, words too innately Italian to have any equivalent but themselves in our sober and unmellifluous language.

*Fiona Maddocks is away*

# Architecture






LEFT *'Not afraid to be a bit ugly': this year's pavilion, featuring the orange plastic nets of the Play Tower.*

ABOVE *The architect, Minsuk Cho: 'You can improvise, pick and choose your experience,' he says.*

# Reasons to be cheerful

**Rowan Moore**



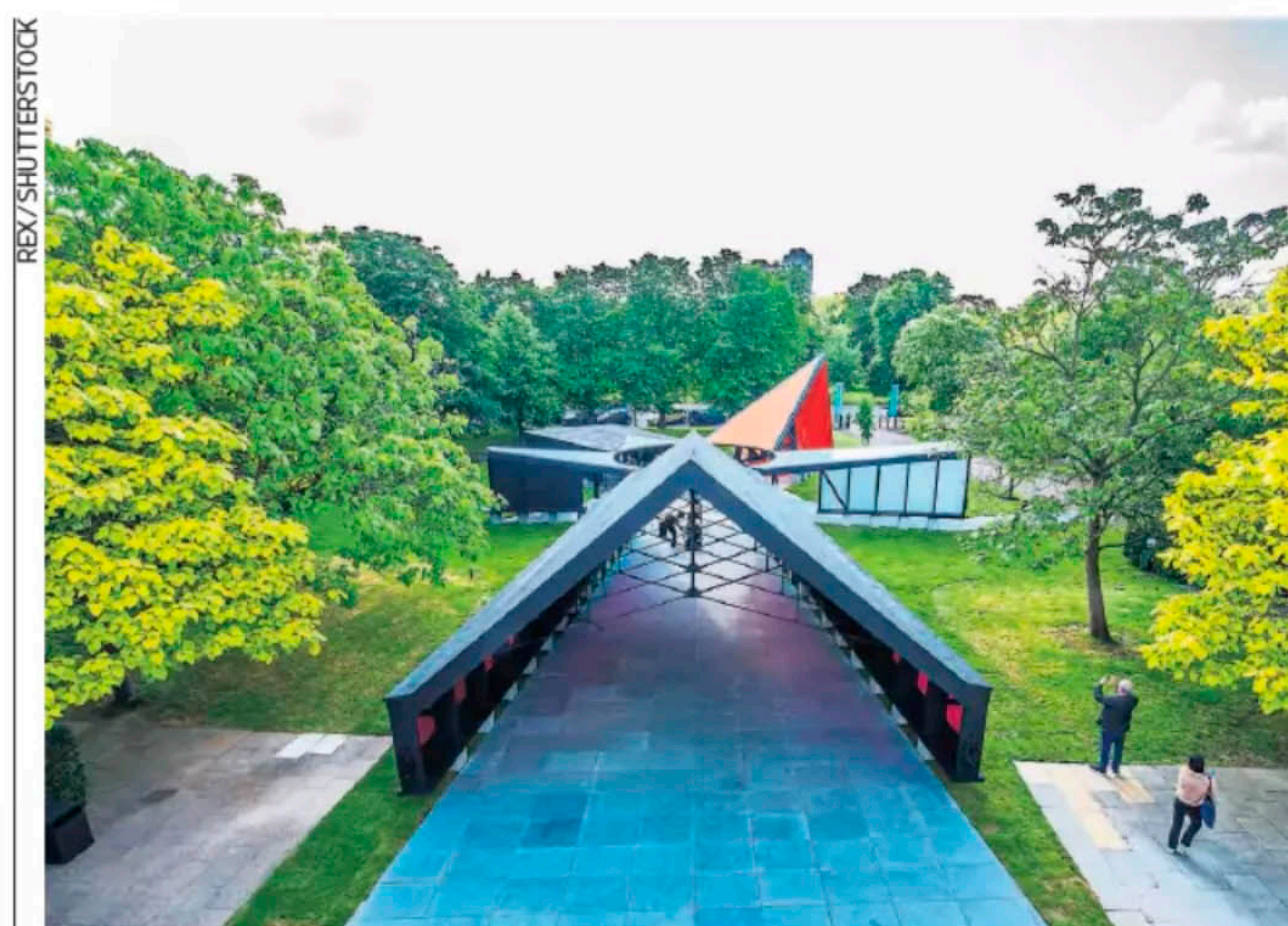
**Serpentine pavilion 2024**
*Kensington Gardens, London*

*The South Korean architect Minsuk Cho has incorporated a climbing structure, a cafe and a library into a playful five-part pavilion, designed to bring us together*

"Do a belly flop." "Spread your arms like Jesus and then jump." The photographers at the press view for the Serpentine pavilion are calling to me: I've ascended a rope climbing structure that is part of the design, and they fancy a shot of a moderately respectable gent flying on to a net underneath. If the role of snappers' stuntman is an unusual addition to the job description of an architecture critic, that's because Minsuk Cho, the South Korean architect of the 23rd edition of the pavilion, sited outside the Serpentine Gallery in Kensington Gardens, London, is the first one to include what he calls a Play Tower in the project.

There's also a small Library of Unread Books assembled by the artist Heman Chong and the archivist Renée Stall, and a sound installation, by the musician and composer Jang Young-Gyu, in addition to a cafe and events space, which are more habitual parts of the pavilion brief. All these are arranged in a star-shaped configuration of triangles and trapezia around an empty central circle. The idea is to create a place "of choices, rather than a grand narrative", as the architect puts it, where "you can improvise, you can pick and choose your experience".

Archipelagic Void, as it is slightly pretentiously called, is a project of many facets, which reflects the fact that Cho is a man of many ideas. In the course of an hour-plus conversation about his pavilion he fires off references to architects well known to cognoscenti – the German expressionist Bruno Taut, the Brazilian genius Lina Bo Bardi, the American visionary Richard Buckminster Fuller, the 19th-century theorist Gottfried Semper, the Mexican master of colour Luis Barragán, the Austrian-American modernist Rudolf Schindler. Metaphors pour from him. His pavilion is a star, an archipelago, a Swiss army knife, an architectural equivalent of Korean multi-dish meals; its central circle is the Buddhist wheel of life. He compares the Serpentine pavilion series as a whole to the James Bond franchise – always the same idea, but with different manifestations.




ABOVE *'Loose but distinctive': a view showing the star-shaped configuration of triangles and trapezia with, in the foreground, the events space.*

Cho, 58, founded and runs the practice Mass Studies in Seoul. Growing up in the repressive atmosphere of South Korea's military dictatorship, he saw architecture as a means of escape, "a visa to go wherever". He studied at Columbia University, worked in Rotterdam for Rem Koolhaas's practice OMA and set up a practice in New York before returning to his native country, by then a democracy. Coming from "a generation where we had bad quality of everything", he now wants to embrace as much as he can of almost anything.

The work of his practice has no fixed style. They can do the cool glass boxes of their Osulloc tea museum and their zigzagging skyscraper known as S-Trenue. "I've always been in no man's land," he says, which means that, as with recent Korean movies and music, there are few preconceptions and few rules. Seeing the world of architecture as divided between the "systematic" and "heterogeneous" camps, or "bold" and "sensitive", he wants to be both.

> *It's a rough-edged composition of sticks and stones, of insistent rhythms and jangling angles*

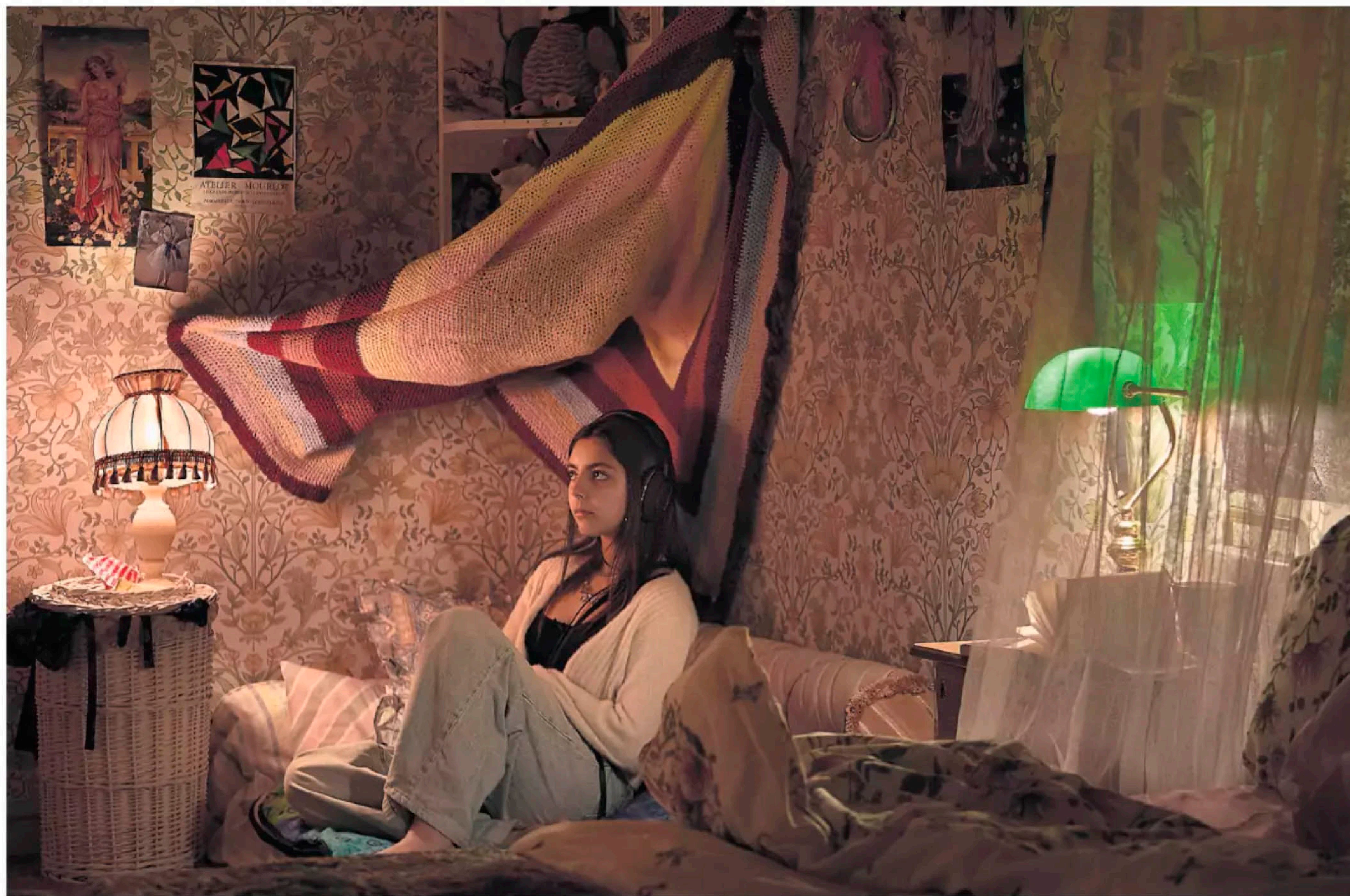
If there's a common theme to his work it's a rather general desire to create "places for people to meet" in cities whose scale and architectural monotony threaten to make traditional urbanism impossible. So the pavilion is intended to be a gathering space, a little village of different uses, with places to sit built into the structure. The design is also about connecting with its surroundings, drawing attention to the park around it and to the 1930s, Wren-style former tea house that is the Serpentine Gallery's permanent home. Affinities are set up in the roof pitches of old and new, and through the framing of trees by the constructions of the pavilion. The events space, a shed/tunnel open at the ends, comes up close to the old french windows of the existing gallery, making a strong connection with rooms where Yinka Shonibare is exhibiting.

The main material is timber, black-stained Douglas fir sourced from 20 miles away in Surrey, formed into barn-like structures resting on concrete piers, in places modernistically cantilevered. Despite its references to its surroundings, the new work is not self-effacing. It is a rough-edged composition of sticks and stones, of insistent rhythms and jangling angles. The orange plastic nets of the Play Tower, along with fuchsia-coloured polycarbonate windows, forestall any orientalist tropes of Zen serenity and minimalism. Regular geometric shapes are unpredictably mixed with scalene quadrilaterals. Sometimes the shadow of the building looks more orderly than the thing itself – a pure circle is cast on the ground or a triangle of light is framed in relative darkness.

It's an enjoyable, playful, centrifugal-centripetal place, loose but distinctive, not afraid to be a bit ugly, full of contrasts and surprises, that gets a lot into its fairly small square footage. There are nice ambiguities of inside and out – the dark, enclosing roof of the events space, for example, is open to the wind at its ends and along its base. The design is characterful but not dominating. It feels like what it is – a temporary building – rather than one that wishes it were permanent. It wears its making, achieved by the manufacturing and engineering company Stage One, on its sleeve.

The Play Tower is a good addition, as sometimes Serpentine pavilions leave you wondering what exactly you are meant to do there, but it does pose another question. You might have as much or more fun, it must be said, in your local rec, and you might even find a cafe and a library nearby. But there's still something special about clambering about a work of architectural invention, with an artist of the calibre of Shonibare on show next door.

Critics
# Theatre

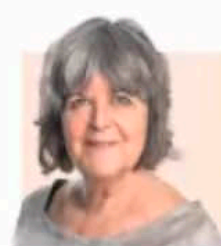



*'Sophisticated in its paradoxes': an audience member in Viola's Room.* *Julian Abrams*

# Let go and follow the light...

*Punchdrunk theatre guide us through a gothic tale with ingenious lighting and Helena Bonham Carter's whispers; while Dominic West is terrific as Arthur Miller's doomed docker*

**Susannah Clapp**



**Viola's Room**
*One Cartridge Place, London SE18; until 18 August*

**A View from the Bridge**
*Theatre Royal Haymarket, London SW1; until 3 August*

Here are two poles of British theatre: the aesthetically free-wheeling, and the socially urgent. Despite the ravages of lockdown, things are not looking too bad.

It was time Punchdrunk took a new turning – and they have. **Viola's Room** is a departure for the immersive magicians, led by artistic director Felix Barrett. It is not only that, after the spacious grandeur of *The Burnt City*, this is a surprisingly intimate show. More fundamentally, audiences are not asked to follow performers independently, deducing a story from fragments of action, but are guided into experiencing the same series of events. Everyone should share one version. Actually, it is not quite as simple as that.

Entering a canvas labyrinth in small groups, spectators are told to follow the light. In fact *Viola's Room* is composed of different illuminations: the wonderful lighting by Simon Wilkinson which steers us through Casey Jay Andrews's design proves that light is not a single thing. It can be the soft overhead radiance from dangling cotton-wool puffballs or the bright gleam through a doorway. It can suggest a personality – a scatter of red fairy bulbs around a girl's looking-glass. It can dazzlingly carve out new places: a miniature palace is created in an alcove when a golden glow pricks out a series of casements and offers a glimpse of shadowy waltzing couples.

The idea of being led by light is not straightforward. Religious overtones are turned upside down in the course of this dance-with-the-devil promenade, while in a first for visually driven Punchdrunk, audiences are actually instructed by sound in the significance of what they see as they walk (and in one instance crawl). Through headphones, they hear Gareth Fry's shivering soundtrack, which includes music by Massive Attack and Tori Amos, and Daisy Johnson's spin on Barry Pain's gothic tale The Moon-Slave. Heavier on adjectival evocation than on plotting, this adventure includes a last-minute escape from a marriage and nods to Hans Christian Andersen's terrifying The Red Shoes: pale pink ballet slippers appear throughout the journey, framed like installations or dangling from a shoe tree.

Whispering is filling the theatre at the moment: heard in *Bluets*, in Jamie Lloyd's *Romeo and Juliet*, in Max Webster's *Macbeth*. Helena Bonham Carter's susurrated narration has the cosy bedtime edge taken off it by a slight rasp in her voice, and her knowingness. Which is as it should be. Though often exquisite, sometimes apparently folkloric, *Viola's Room* is sophisticated in its paradoxes. Its story is about compulsion and loss of control, yet this is the show in which Punchdrunk has most evidently controlled its own audience.

**A View from the Bridge** seems to me the most rewarding of Arthur Miller's plays. This is partly a question of expectation. The drama does not – as does *Death of a Salesman* – stagger under the burden of an everyman figure. It is less challenged by political updating than *The Crucible*. It has such an unexpected core. A Greek tragedy set in Brooklyn in the 1950s, its plot pivots on the obsession of a middle-aged longshoreman with his teenage niece. It is alive with doom.

> *Religious overtones are turned upside down in this dance-with-the-devil promenade*

The dramatic strangeness was rendered viscerally in Ivo van Hove's peeled-back slab-of-meat Young Vic production nine years ago. It is apparent even in Lindsay Posner's more stolid production. The pace is deliberate. Martin Marquez's introduction as the narrator is stiff; Peter McKintosh's design – brown tenement buildings with iron stairways – secures the setting but does little to create claustrophobia. Nevertheless, there is a growing sense of dislocation. The evening is vivid where it most matters. In the central performances.

Dominic West is a terrific Eddie, not least because – yes, he is the same actor who became Prince Charles in *The Crown* – he makes you believe he has put a day in on the docks. He begins as physically relaxed as a big cat; as his anguish grows, he becomes a blood blister of a man: dark in the face, heavy-limbed, ready to burst. His unfulfilled desire – his inability to acknowledge what he feels – stains his own life and the lives of those around him. Kate Fleetwood is beautifully subtle and shrewd as the cast-aside woman who does not stop loving her husband. Her reactions are under the skin – her eyes flicking, mouth narrowing as unhappiness drains her colour – yet out of the slit of her lips comes strong truth. Nia Towle makes a lovely passionate debut as the desired niece.

It struck me for the first time how radically all the characters are displaced, psychologically or physically; how they look with wonder or horror on those who live differently. The trigger of the tragedy is the arrival of Italian immigrants without legal documentation: one of them jealously denounced by Eddie as being no man, because he can cook. The end – with betrayal, authorities pounding on the door, and bloodshed – carries a terrible warning for today.



*'A blood blister of a man': Dominic West as Eddie, with Callum Scott Howells as Rodolpho, in The View from the Bridge.* *Getty Images*

## Shorts



PAMELA RAITH

### Fanny
*The Watermill Theatre, Newbury; until Saturday*

Felix is working out an idea at the piano. What does his sister Fanny think? It needs more contrast, more dissonance, she tells him and, settling herself at the keyboard, demonstrates her meaning. The melody she plays is familiar. We now know it as the wedding march, part of Felix Mendelssohn's incidental music for A Midsummer Night's Dream. Both Mendelssohn siblings were talented composers, conductors and performers, but, in the first half of the 19th century only one could expect to gain public recognition.

In his new, high-spirited, fantastical, quasi-period comedy, Calum Finlay plays off the contrasts of the possibilities open to each of the siblings by setting up a scenario where Fanny pretends to be Felix so as to take up an invitation to perform for Queen Victoria. Accompanied by her fiance, Wilhelm (George Howard), and by another struggling female composer, Clara Schumann, she sets off across Europe, the women facing up to sexist encounters along the way. The furious Felix (Corey Montague-Sholay) follows in hot pursuit, along with their mother (Kim Ismay); the final-leg, accelerando, carriage race along the Mall is a Wacky Races-Ben-Hur mash up.

Finlay's mix of farce, cartoon and pantomime, seriousness and sentiment is entertaining, from moment to moment, but too capriciously unstructured to be really satisfying. An excessive emphasis on fun disrupts the drama: instead of the action growing out of the interplay of the characters, it is too obviously shaped to service the needs of particular situations. This is especially apparent in the development of the relationship between Fanny and Clara (nonetheless invested with nuance by Charlie Russell, pictured above, and Jade May Lin, respectively).

Staging, under Katie-Ann McDonough's direction, is witty and fast-paced, facilitated by Sophia Pardon's designs (sight-and-sound gags deliver laughs and emotional impact). Yshani Perinpanayagam's musical direction and additional compositions are both subtle and tonally effective. All six performers (last but not least, Harry Kershaw, in several roles) strike the right chords. **Clare Brennan**

### Beckett Unbound 2024: Krapp's Last Tape; All That Fall
*Stanley theatre; Toxteth Reservoir, Liverpoool*

Adrian Dunbar could have called his Beckett festival "Unwound". Over four days, across theatres and outdoor sites in Liverpool, he presents short plays by the writer he reveres "like a secular saint", whose characters unravel as death circles round.

First, the old man combing recorded chronicles of his younger years, in minor masterpiece **Krapp's Last Tape**. Denis Lavant is remarkable at showing Krapp's decline. Tendrils of hair unspool from his head, his posture is as crumpled as his storage boxes, and his stiff limbs judder across the stage like a decrepit animatronic. Creaks could be from the stage or his legs.

His routines loop – comically caressing a banana, his only companion – until he freezes, like a stuck tape, when rewinding to squandered romance: "I could have been happy with her." His hollow expression suggests he's bulldozed both by amnesia and sorrow as memories evaporate.

If Jacques Osinski's production modulates a little roughly between Beckett's comedy and pathos, Krapp's desolation is poleaxing – his hand cupped to his ear, trying to catch sounds and memories, spooling back as his own tape winds to an end.

As tapes have B-sides, so does the festival. Dunbar's adaptation of Beckett's radio play **All That Fall** plunges the audience, for its duration, into darkness at Toxteth's disused reservoir. All senses fall away except sound. It has to work hard, as do our imaginations.

The simple plot of a woman being continuously interrupted by townsfolk on her way to meet her husband at a station, where there's been an accident, falls away along with the dialogue in the building's echoing acoustics, the cast reading behind us while we sit facing a wall. A ghostly whistle and hiss of steam help transform the arch we're huddled around into a train tunnel, after which an initially chirrupy burst of Schubert sounds funereal. But the constant darkness feels incongruous with these country bumpkins' trivial conversations. Beckett's characters try to see their way through the murk. Little is gained by making us do the same. **Matt Barton**



*'Remarkable': Denis Lavant in Krapp's Last Tape. Pierre Grosbois*

# Burgess prize 2024
## Winner

# Bambi gets nasty

*The Observer/Anthony Burgess prize for arts journalism is our annual review-writing competition for fresh voices. This year's winner, beating stiff competition, is student Oscar Jelley, who dissects the politics and surrealist fantasy of Isabel Waidner's latest novel, Corey Fah Does Social Mobility*

*Oscar Jelley is an MA student at the University of Oxford. He has written for student papers such as Cherwell, the Oxford Blue and the Oxford Review of Books, and has a Substack, Adventures Close to Home*

"Life should be full of strangeness/ like a rich painting," declares the protagonist of the Fall's How I Wrote Elastic Man, a song about a writer whose success ruins his life. It could just as well be the credo of Isabel Waidner, whose latest book, *Corey Fah Does Social Mobility* (Penguin), concerns a novelist named Corey Fah whose world is upended after they win an "award for the fictionalisation of social evils". When Fah goes to collect the trophy, it flies away, leaving them with nothing but the strange half-deer, half-spider hybrid that has inexplicably appeared beside them. They take him home and call him "Bambi Pavok".

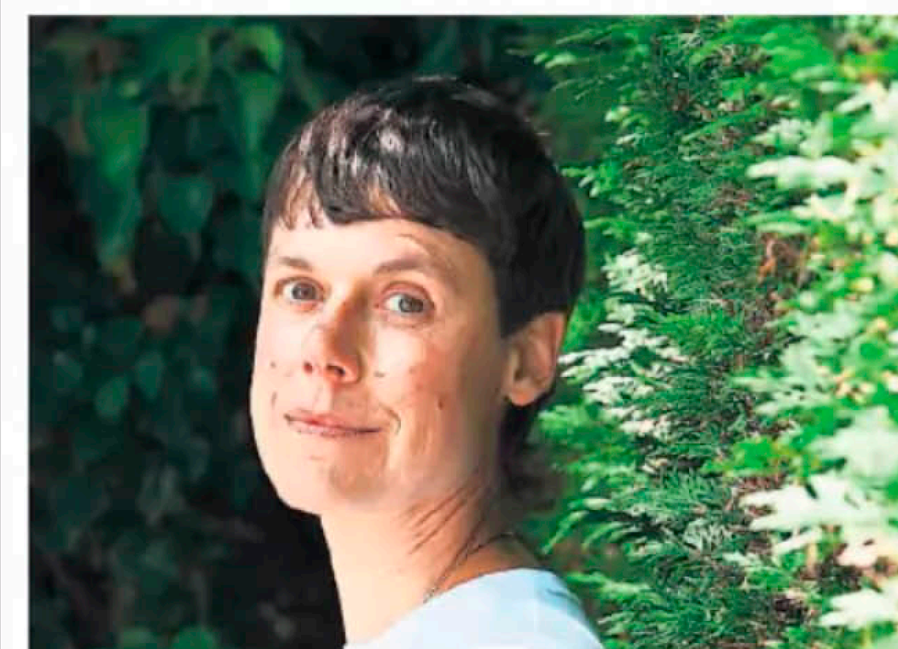
The subsequent narrative eschews realism in favour of the rich strangeness of a chatshow about wormholes presented by a man in boxing shorts, a retelling of *Bambi* in terms of working-class *ressentiment*, and hints of a world in which most things are broken and reality is taking on bizarre new shapes.

Waidner is a political moralist and doesn't care about seeming didactic: their novel intends to make unambiguous points about genuine social injustice. Its flights of vivid fancy are largely held together by an argument about how exclusive our cultural institutions remain, even when they're falling over each other to trumpet their inclusivity. Truth-telling is the novelist's prerogative, of course. But *Corey Fah* sometimes feels a little scholastic, as though it were written to be taught at universities; as with Waidner's previous work, it ends with a short list of references.

The best parts of the book are those that capture an aspect of our reality in a scenario or an image while retaining an irreducible element of oddness. One example is the passage that deals with Bambi Pavok's unhappy childhood in "the forest", where he's abused by his deadbeat dad, a mendacious spider, and bullied by his friend Fumper, a rabbit whose life sounds equally grim. Compared with Nell Zink's recent novel *Avalon*, which also dealt with the unwritten rules that govern the often suffocatingly bourgeois world of prestige culture, Waidner places more emphasis on the ways in which working-class people are pitted against each other by their circumstances and social institutions. On their telling, Disney's *Bambi* was an affluent naïf; when his mother is shot, we pity him for losing the innocence that is the privilege of a sheltered upbringing. Bambi Pavok is forced to adopt defensive postures of vicious self-interest. He's harder to root for, but more interesting, and ultimately more sympathetic too.

The novel's style comprises a weird melange of idioms, sprinkled with foreign words that further deterritorialise the anonymous "international city" in which it takes place. Despite a subplot about the playwright Joe Orton and a character with the surname Hölderlin, it often reads like literature for a post-literary age, one whose habits of expression are largely shaped by TV, video games, marketing and social media. Several times Fah deploys the phrase "what a concept", which I've never encountered outside the notorious Smash Mouth single All Star. Overall, it's an interesting approximation of the way people often talk and think now – in a stream of unmoored phrases and references, sporadically dispensing with extraneous prepositions and articles. If it makes for generally lively and distinctive prose, it sometimes falls short in the novel's especially imagistic sections, where a more self-consciously artful style might have been called for.

Today's bookshops are so glutted with tedious, well-behaved novels that it seems slightly churlish not to extol this one. Yet for all its ostentatious convention-bucking, it's not clear how much of an alternative *Corey Fah* really offers. Near the end, Fah recalls days spent in public libraries "reading as if my life depended on it, and it did, it did". This small moment is a nice reminder of why literature should not be the preserve of a moneyed elite: it has the power to liberate people from the fetters of circumstance. The surreal happenings in this book, however, are primarily allegories for the hard facts of systemic disadvantage, suggesting that imaginative literature can help the underprivileged to better understand the restrictions placed on them by accident of birth, but not to overcome them.



*Isabel Waidner, photographed in London for the Observer by Karen Robinson.*

Yet this view fails to do justice to the world-expanding potential of art. Countless cultural artefacts, including the aforementioned How I Wrote Elastic Man, testify to the ability of working-class people to defy their unfair lot and discover new ways of being through acts of imagination. Waidner's novel uses estrangement to make an all too comprehensible case against bourgeois cultural gatekeeping. But can't there be something equally radical about strangeness for strangeness's sake?

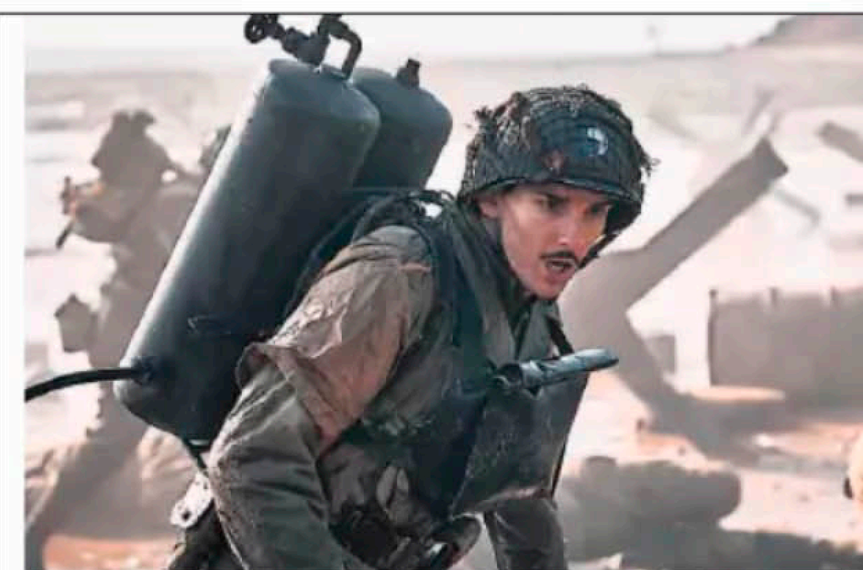
*To read the entries by this year's runners-up, Alice Hughes and Anna McGee, visit theguardian.com/observer*

Critics

# Television

BELOW 'Almost indecently glamorous': Daniel Brühl and Théodore Pellerin as the designer and his lover in Becoming Karl Lagerfeld. Disney





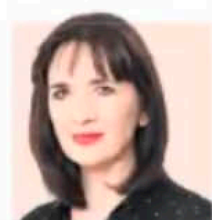


TOP 'You're there with the soldiers' in D-Day: the Unheard Tapes. BBC

ABOVE 'Gameshow vibe': Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak in The ITV debate. ITV

# Love among the lederhosen

**Barbara Ellen**



**Becoming Karl Lagerfeld** *Disney +*

**Sunak v Starmer: The ITV Debate** *ITV*

**D-Day: The Unheard Tapes** *BBC Two*

**Queenie** *Channel 4*

*Passion and high fashion are a heady mix in Disney's Lagerfeld drama; the leaders' debate proves a waste of time; an oral history of D-day works brilliantly; and Candice Carty-Williams's heroine has men trouble*

The new Disney+ French drama **Becoming Karl Lagerfeld** won a standing ovation at the Canneseries television festival, and it's easy to see why. I'm not sure what I was expecting – maybe something brittle and peculiar, not unlike its subject. The late German designer (he died in 2019), who ended up as Chanel's creative director, was known for strutting around with platinum hair, flapping his signature fan, spewing bitchy asides (Adele was labelled "a little too fat").

This six-part series, created by Isaure Pisani-Ferry, Jennifer Have and Raphaëlle Bacqué, goes back to the 1970s and 80s, with Lagerfeld played by gifted German-Spanish actor Daniel Brühl (*Inglourious Bastards*, *All Quiet o n the Western Front*).

It's set, of course, in the world of Parisian haute couture: the spats; the drama; the sketchpads; Lagerfeld's struggles not to be dismissed as a "ready-to-wear mercenary". However, its true subject is Lagerfeld's intense *amour* with Jacques de Bascher (Théodore Pellerin), the fiery French dandy who becomes the sexually daring yin to Lagerfeld's uptight yang (it's not depicted in the series, but De Bascher died of an Aids-related illness in 1989, nursed by Lagerfeld).

Donning lederhosen to meet Lagerfeld, De Bascher has a provocative way with words: "I wanted you to unwrap me like a gift and all I get is boils on my anus!" He craves a full relationship, but Lagerfeld can't cope. The situation is complicated by Lagerfeld's designer rival Yves Saint Laurent (Arnold Valois), who has a penchant for drugs and BDSM. Crikey, if I'd known all this back in the day, I'd have sprayed my YSL Paris perfume around with more gusto.

*Becoming Karl Lagerfeld* is almost indecently glamorous (gowns, chateaus, decadence), but also much more than that. It's about repression, power struggles, decay and painful, terrible love. The two leads (both brilliant) manage to bring dignity and melancholy to their unconventional bond. There are some lulls (quelle surprise!), but it's a beautiful work. It made me think about Lagerfeld – *really* think about him – in a completely different way.

Is it OK that I had an erotic dream about Rishi Sunak? The prime minister was on stage rudely interrupting Keir Starmer. A studio audience was there, talking about the cost of living and the broken NHS, which made Sunak yell about being "bold" and about Labour intending to raises taxes by £2,000 a year. The figure was made up, conjured by civil servants ("Absolute garbage," said Starmer), but I suppose anything goes in an erotic dream…



LEFT Big themes and a strong cast: Dionne Brown and Tilly Keeper in Queenie. Channel 4/Latoya Okuneye

Of course, it wasn't a dream, steamy or otherwise. It was **Sunak v Starmer: The ITV Debate**, the first televised leaders' debate of the general election. Perhaps to lend a little razzle-dazzle to the 14 years of Tory rule downer, the set had lit-up podiums and a quasi-gameshow (The Bleakest Link?) vibe.

Charging through issues (immigration, climate change), host Julie Etchingham did her best ("Gentlemen, please!"), but both men kept running over time. Sunak was the worst (boorish, butting in), though his voice started quavering when the audience laughed at his "bring back national service" idea, which Starmer dubbed "a teenage *Dad's Army*".

People mock the Labour leader for referring to his working-class roots ("My father was a toolmaker"), but hark at Sunak – witnessed here, cravenly trying to summon a rosy nostalgic glow about the pandemic. "I'll always have your back as I did with furlough," he sighed, batting "Dishy Rishi" lashes at the camera.

Who won? Did anybody? Yes, politicians should be tested, but I'm increasingly unconvinced by these growly, gladiatorial US-style debates – not because they aren't great telly, but precisely because they are.

Mark Radice's superb docuseries, **D-Day: The Unheard Tapes,** marks the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings. In three instalments, it depicts the devastating but ultimately successful landings in northern France and the fighting afterwards, in which 100,000 lives were lost.

Similar to 2022's *Aids: The Unheard Tapes*, from the same production stable, the story is told by actors (at the ages the people would have been on D-day) lip-synching to genuine audio recordings from

# Audio



*As Queenie, Dionne Brown embodies a smart, unapologetically messy heroine*

archives around the world. There are testimonies from allied troops (British, American, Canadian), but also Normandy civilians, the French resistance and members of the German military.

With historians giving extra context, this relatively new form of oral history is more immersive than regular documentary and it works brilliantly. You feel connected to the people as they sit on dingy 1940s upholstery, sometimes sporting spivvy moustaches, tugging their ears anxiously. You feel you're there with the soldiers trying to make it over the doomed, blood-splattered beaches.

As it's the first "taste of battle" for many, the fighters initially seem to draw strength from a heightened form of adrenaline, but in the face of unfolding horror, it soon drains away. In the words of one US army lieutenant: "To see your friends, people you've served with for years, floating face down or face up in the water... At times, I was crying". As the years pass, the need to remember becomes ever more urgent. A heartfelt bravo to the actors, who pull off a difficult task respectfully and seamlessly.

Published in 2019, Candice Carty-Williams's novel **Queenie** (dubbed "the Black Bridget Jones" by the author) sold about 150,000 copies in the UK alone. Now it's an eight-part Channel 4 dramedy created by Carty-Williams and starring Dionne Brown as Queenie, a 25-year-old British-Jamaican woman, who suffers an agonising breakup with her white boyfriend (Jon Pointing from *Big Boys*) and grapples with trauma from her past.

Myriad big themes thread through the show: racism, interracial relationships ("Why is this family against seasoning?"), violence and abandonment. Reeling from a miscarriage, Queenie ends up on soul-destroying dating apps ("Bet you taste of chocolate").

Brown embodies a smart, unapologetically messy heroine, backed by a strong cast, including Samuel Adewunmi (*You Don't Know Me*) and singer-songwriter Bellah as Queenie's gobby BFF ("Why don't you start dating black guys... throw some melanin in the mix?"). There are weaknesses (even with Sally Phillips playing the editor, Queenie's media workplace is too sketchily drawn), but this is nicely honed television not without bite.

## WATCH LIST

*Barbara Ellen's best of the rest*

**Lost Boys and Fairies**
(BBC One)
Daf James's wrenchingly emotional drama, also featuring glorious full-on musical numbers. Two Welsh gay men (Sion Daniel Young and Fra Fee) try to adopt, but one of them has suffered a traumatic childhood.

**The Acolyte**
(Disney+)
A moody new *Star Wars* spin-off, created by Leslye Headland (*Russian Doll*), focusing on the Jedi in a pre-*Star Wars* era. Starring Amandla Stenberg (pictured, below), this time, the lightsabers have a distinctly feminist twist.

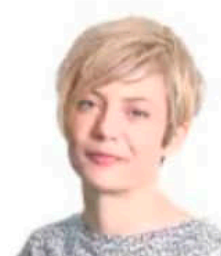
**Love Island**
(ITV for launch, then ITV2)
So it returns: the sun-soaked Instagram-adjacent TV-romance juggernaut. Hosted by Maya Jama from Mallorca, thus far it lacks energy but could yet pep up.



## Podcasts & radio

# A case of daylight robbery

**Miranda Sawyer**



**Shadow World: Thief at the British Museum** *BBC Radio 4*
**Memories from the Dance Floor** *Damian Kerlin*
**The John Dredge Nothing to Do with Anything Show** comedy.co.uk
**More or Less** *BBC Radio 4*

**Thief at the British Museum** is a warm, classy series that's been ticking along daily on Radio 4 over the past two weeks. Though it's true crime, it feels more like a whodunnit. There are Agatha Christie elements – an eccentric foreign detective, missing precious gemstones, a potential thief whose story appears to crumble through proper sleuthing – all enhanced by a suspenseful orchestral soundtrack. You will remember the news last year that hundreds of ancient artefacts from the British Museum went missing and were sold (on eBay!), but nobody at the institution had noticed. When the evidence was finally taken seriously, a senior curator from the institution was sacked (Peter Higgs, who denies the thefts but is being sued in a civil case by the museum).

Katie Razzall, the BBC's culture and media editor, is our host: her script is neat and she strikes up a lovely rapport with the hero of the series, Dr Ittai Gradel. A Dutch dealer in antiquities, Gradel is perfect casting: charismatic and eccentric, with a mind like a steel trap. As a young man, he visited the British Museum repeatedly until he'd seen every single artefact on display; later, he acquired old museum catalogues, which he devoured. Because of his photographic memory, he retained all this information and a few years ago realised that some gems he saw on eBay being sold by a vendor called sultan1966 were actually museum property. Sultan1966's real name, as shown on a PayPal receipt: Peter Higgs. The museum is not allowed to sell any of its artefacts.

Slam dunk, you'd think, but the tale doesn't end with Gradel's sleuthing. He has to persuade the museum's high-ups to take him seriously. This proves more difficult than expected, mostly because the person that everyone reports to is, you guessed it, Peter Higgs. In episode nine, we hear Gradel packing up gems that he'd bought from sultan1966 to take to the museum, without warning the people who work there, so he can avoid "all this form-filling bollocks". When artefacts return to the museum, the curators ring a bell to celebrate. We hear that bell. Delightful.

More sleuthing, but of the cultural kind. It's Pride month and last week saw the return of **Memories from the Dance Floor**, an independent series about LGBTQ+ nightlife. The first series examined well-known London venues such as Heaven and the Black Cap pub, but for series two, we're off to the gay scene in Wales and, for this opener, back to the 1970s and 80s. We hear the heartwarming story of Tecwyn Vaughan Jones, who moved from a rural town to go to Bangor University and recalled the first time he went to a gay club, in the North Western hotel in Llandudno.

"You could hardly see from one end to the other because of the [cigarette] smoke," he remembered. "And the record that was playing on the jukebox was The Wonder of You by Elvis Presley." It's small details such as this that I love. Vaughn Jones described meeting a "very effeminate homosexual" at the bar, a fellow Welsh-speaker in mascara, lipstick, with long hair, wearing a cape. They got on fantastically. "It was a time in my life when my life changed," he said.

We also heard from Zoe Balfour, who set up a lesbian phone line in Cardiff. There were lots of gay women who knew no other lesbians, so Zoe and her friends would meet them and they'd go to the clubs together, or just have a coffee and a chat. They set up their own women's discos, because there were so few places for lesbians to go.

Damian Kerlin, who presents, gives a nicely judged overview of gay life, including the legal background, in between these stories. What's appealing about this series is its sweetness; nothing particularly dramatic happens, but you get a sense of gradual blossomings, of people moving into their true selves, and it's completely lovely.

Another excellent independent effort is **The John Dredge Nothing to Do With Anything Show**, from a comedian who always delivers. We're on series six! Dredge is someone made for Radio 4, I feel, but never appears there: Radio 4's 6.30pm slots are taken by established panel show types, or by up-and-coming comics. Dredge (pictured, below) is neither, but his series are always hilariously silly – Chris Morris meets Milton Jones – and he makes best use of the medium by creating a madcap space that you can picture in your imagination but would cost thousands if it were a film set.



There are a lot of middle-aged references (John Peel, *The Avengers*, old Hollywood) and the jokes come at you fast, piling up on top of each other until you can't help but giggle. At one point, he's broadcasting from inside a jar of jam. Resistance is futile. Every line's a winner.

Just space to mention the welcome unpicking of general election guff on Wednesday morning's **More or Less**. The morning after the Rishi Sunak v Keir Starmer TV debate, Tim Harford and Kate Lamble looked at the stats referenced in the political encounter. Sunak had insisted that Labour would require every household to pay an extra £2,000, which Harford and Lamble called "an old election trick", where a political party adds up what it says (speculates) its opposition's policies will cost. They also examined Starmer's claim about how much the Tories' proposed abolition of national insurance and inheritance tax would cost (these are not Conservative policies, said Lamble, but ambitions). Their sensible analysis was both refreshing and reassuring.



*'Classy': in Thief at the British Museum, Katie Razzall presents an investigation into hundreds of stolen artefacts.* EPA

Music

# Hip-hop, you don't stop: a soundtrack for the world

*Questlove – the Roots drummer, DJ, author and director – is the Ken Burns of black music, and his personal reflections on a genre that last year turned 50 are full of wisdom and charm, writes Dorian Lynskey*



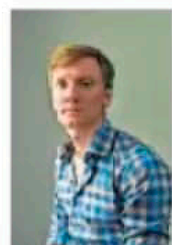
**Hip-Hop Is History**
**Questlove**
*White Rabbit, £25, pp352*

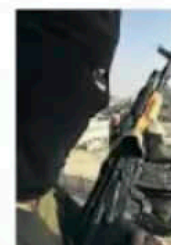
Hip-hop officially turned 50 last year. It is generally accepted that it was born on 11 August 1973, when 18-year-old DJ Kool Herc first cut up breakbeats at a party in the Bronx and his friend Coke La Rock rapped along, but this DJ-driven art form, which evolved parallel to disco, took another six years to spawn its first hit single, the Sugarhill Gang's Rapper's Delight. The star MCs emerged in its second decade, each one redrawing the bounds of the possible. Run-DMC stripped it down, then Public Enemy blew it up. De La Soul made it friendly, Kool Keith made it freaky, NWA made it outrageous, and so on. Always changing, always expanding.

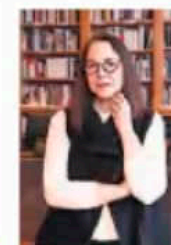
Nobody knows more about hip-hop, and perhaps popular music in general, than Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson. Still drumming with the Roots, the Philadelphia hip-hop crew that have been Jimmy Fallon's TV house band since 2009, he is also the Oscar-winning director of *Summer of Soul*, a prolific author, podcaster and DJ, and the man tasked with herding cats for the Grammys' salute to hip-hop at 50. Two years older than the art form itself, he has become its unofficial curator, the Ken Burns of black music, the nerd's nerd. "History is how change gets marked and assessed," he writes in his eighth book. "It's a communal form of memory and a collective acknowledgment that what we remember matters."

In Questlove's analysis, hip-hop is an eternal cycle of death and rebirth. It has always fetishised the new style: note how many MCs still use the prefix "Yung" or "Lil". During its first two decades, it was dizzyingly ruthless. A debut record could change the whole game only for its creator to be eclipsed in turn a couple of years later. Longevity

This week


**Torsten Bell**
*Gaby Hinsliff reviews the economist and Labour candidate's proposals for a better Britain*


**Hamas**
*Daniel Hilton on a part history, part analysis of the Islamist movement by two Middle East experts*


**Lorrie Moore**
*The American author on madness, her new novel and the literary character with whom she most identifies*


*Questlove's favourite act, A Tribe Called Quest (from left: Ali Shaheed Muhammad, Q-Tip and Phife Dawg), in New York, 1991. Al Pereira/Getty*


*LEFT Ahmir 'Questlove' Thompson, who sees hip-hop as an eternal cycle of death and rebirth. Daniel Dorsa*

*RIGHT 'Shock of the new': Wu-Tang Clan in 1994. Al Pereira/Getty*

seemed impossible. But around the time *XXL* magazine convened 177 artists in Harlem for a 25th anniversary group portrait in 1998, hip-hop learned to appreciate its own heritage. When 20-year-old Queens rapper Nas released his stone-cold masterpiece Illmatic in 1994, it would have been strange to imagine that he would one day be performing a 30th anniversary tour, yet here he is, one of many revered elder statesmen.

Questlove has no allergy to hyperbole. When he compares the 1995 *Source* awards, the epicentre of the war between east and west coast rappers that contributed to the murders of Tupac and the Notorious BIG, to the Battle of Gettysburg, or the kick drum on the Pharcyde's Bullshit to the French Revolution, he is only half joking. This is indeed a dramatic tale. During the 1980s, hip-hop went from delightful novelty to scowling bogeyman, with leading scold Tipper Gore claiming: "The music says it's OK to beat people up." Then, in the decade between KRS-One insisting "It's not about a salary, it's all about reality", and the Notorious BIG boasting "It's all about the Benjamins", it became a money-making machine. New sounds from new regions produced new disruptions. Questlove was in the thick of it, fretting with each sea change that he was out of touch and washed up – "obsessed with the threat of erasure".

For all the author's wisdom and charm, his blizzard of names and facts is likely to overwhelm, rather than exhilarate, the uninitiated. The book at times resembles an annotated playlist, with the origin of one sample requiring no fewer than three sets of nested parentheses. Questlove is an idiosyncratic guide who admits that he values production over lyrics and candidly recalls his initial scepticism towards artists as significant as the Wu-Tang Clan or Lil Wayne – the time it took to absorb the shock of the new. This isn't *the* history, then; it's *his* history, as a fan, practitioner and chronicler of hip-hop.

Provided you have a little prior knowledge, it's a wonderful ride, coloured by personal digressions and crisp observations. Questlove astutely identifies Kanye West's fatal flaw as "the general lack of self-awareness, made worse by the belief that there is total self-awareness at work" and nails the older Eminem as a wheel-spinning virtuoso, "maybe with nothing to say any more, but with quite a talent for saying it" – a line that could apply to many veterans.

Questlove's life-cycle thesis is embodied by the 30-year journey of his favourite act, A Tribe Called Quest: the youthful chutzpah, the rapid maturation, the diminishing returns, the dispiriting break-up and the extraordinary comeback that became a swansong with the death of founding member Phife Dawg. I attended the launch party for that album, *We Got It from Here... Thank You 4 Your Service*, in Queens the day after Donald Trump won the 2016 election. Questlove was there, too, DJing classic hip-hop. Shellshocked and jet lagged, I almost cried. In that context, his turntable history lesson felt proudly defiant and utterly necessary, underlining the music's essential claim: we are still here, despite everything. "So much of hip-hop is a reflection of pain," he writes, "even the joyful parts."

*To order Hip-Hop Is History for £22 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*

**Fiction**

# Oh my darling Clémentine...

*The bedroom antics of two couples 50 years apart drive Lauren Elkin's debut novel, a cerebral comedy full of insights into art, womanhood and ethical quandaries. By Anthony Cummins*

**Scaffolding**
**Lauren Elkin**
*Chatto & Windus, £16.99, pp400*

Set in pre-Covid Paris, Lauren Elkin's first novel is a brainy sex comedy narrated by Anna, a Franco-American psychoanalyst on medical leave in the wake of a miscarriage. Her lawyer husband is away from home on a job in London, leaving her to oversee the long-planned knocking through of a wall in their Belleville apartment. It's August – all her friends are out of town – and she's drifting until she gets a new neighbour: Clémentine, an art history postgraduate who has just moved into a nearby building with her boyfriend, Jonathan – the name, coincidentally, of Anna's most serious ex, the son of a famous psychoanalyst whose books turned her on to the discipline.

The first third of the novel ambles amiably in exploratory chat between the two women, despite a crackle of ambient dread in ominous signs of climate change (record temperatures in the city; wildfires in Corsica) as well as, more immediately, the mounting toll of French women murdered by men – an outrage highlighted by a guerrilla poster campaign Anna notices on her daily run. But *Scaffolding*'s real action comes in the bedroom: first when, a third of the way through the book, Elkin winds back the action nearly 50 years to toggle between Florence and Henry, an unfaithfully married couple who used to live in Anna's flat, and then, in the novel's final part, when we follow the narrator's own bed-hopping in the present, as Clémentine widens Anna's sexual horizons.

Elkin gives us two versions of an adultery plot, the second a self-consciously queered retread of the first. Clémentine, who says she spends her days "writing poetry and masturbating", functions in the novel as a kind of constant question for Anna, loosening her view of monogamy, prodding her guilt as a slightly self-loathing gentrifier as well as needling her about the assumptions of psychoanalysis and its "Mommy-Daddy-Me structure, like there's no one else in the world who affects who we become, or the binary take on gender... It's, like, patriarchy, bottled and distilled".



Elkin's date-stamped sign-off tells us the novel was begun in 2007 and completed last year – there's a list of five Paris addresses where she wrote it – and it's interesting to think of how the landscape of modern fiction changed in that period. In putting property at the centre of a novel about womanhood and sexuality, *Scaffolding* joins books by Rachel Cusk (*Transit*) and Deborah Levy (*Real Estate*), and as an erudite lust quadrilateral interested in ethical quandaries, it may put you in mind of Sally Rooney (even if Clémentine didn't at one point mention watching a television series "based on an Irish novel", which is "kind of annoying... Like, sleep together, don't sleep together, do your thing"). Indeed, the rapid tying up of loose ends, embracing social norms given side-eye by the rest of the novel, bears resemblance to the left-turn conclusion of *Beautiful World, Where Are You*. Instead of a blocked writer in the wake of a breakdown, we've got a blocked analyst in the wake of grief re-envisioning life from the ground up ("Something Clém said has stuck with me for weeks now and I don't know what to do with it; something like whether psychoanalysis ought to be socially transformative to justify its existence").

Elkin, as well as being a prolific translator, has previously published cultural criticism and experimental memoir (*No 91/92: Notes on a Parisian Commute*), and in many ways *Scaffolding* is a critic's novel, full of insights that could seamlessly appear in Elkin's nonfiction. Anna and Clémentine exchange views of Hans Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* or Chris Kraus's novel *I Love Dick*; in a conversation near the end of the novel, when its emotional freight is heaviest, Anna looks up a word's etymology on her phone. "In *The Symposium*, early on, Plato talks about..." or "At the beginning of Encore, Lacan's twentieth seminar, which he gave in 1972-73, he says that..." aren't untypical ways for Elkin to open a sentence.

But if her instincts as a scene-maker point towards retrospective testimony rather than in-the-moment drama, there's no shortage of excitement in the twists supplied by what each character doesn't know (or chooses to hide or ignore) about one another, to say nothing of the book's increasingly horny energy, and a cheerfully deflating sense of comedy, as when another key speech is delivered with dried snot visible in the speaker's nostril, moving "as she breathes in and out, like a flag... mak[ing] it all slightly ridiculous". The novel's strength lies in its balance of seriousness and lightness, and it's a mark of Elkin's success that her somewhat abrupt conclusion to Anna's story nonetheless feels hard-won.

*To order Scaffolding for £14.44 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*

Environment

# The depths of despair

*Olive Heffernan struggles to find any signs of optimism in this comprehensive investigation of the staggering damage we have done to the world's oceans and its life forms, writes Robin McKie*

**The High Seas: Ambition, Power and Greed on the Unclaimed Ocean**
**Olive Heffernan**
*Profile, £22, pp352*

On 21 December 1872, HMS Challenger set sail from Portsmouth on a voyage that would transform our knowledge of our planet. Sailing with state-of-the-art equipment and a complement of 243 scientists and crew, the former British warship zigzagged for 70,000 nautical miles (130,000km) across the globe, taking thousands of physical, biological and chemical measurements of the sea and seabed.

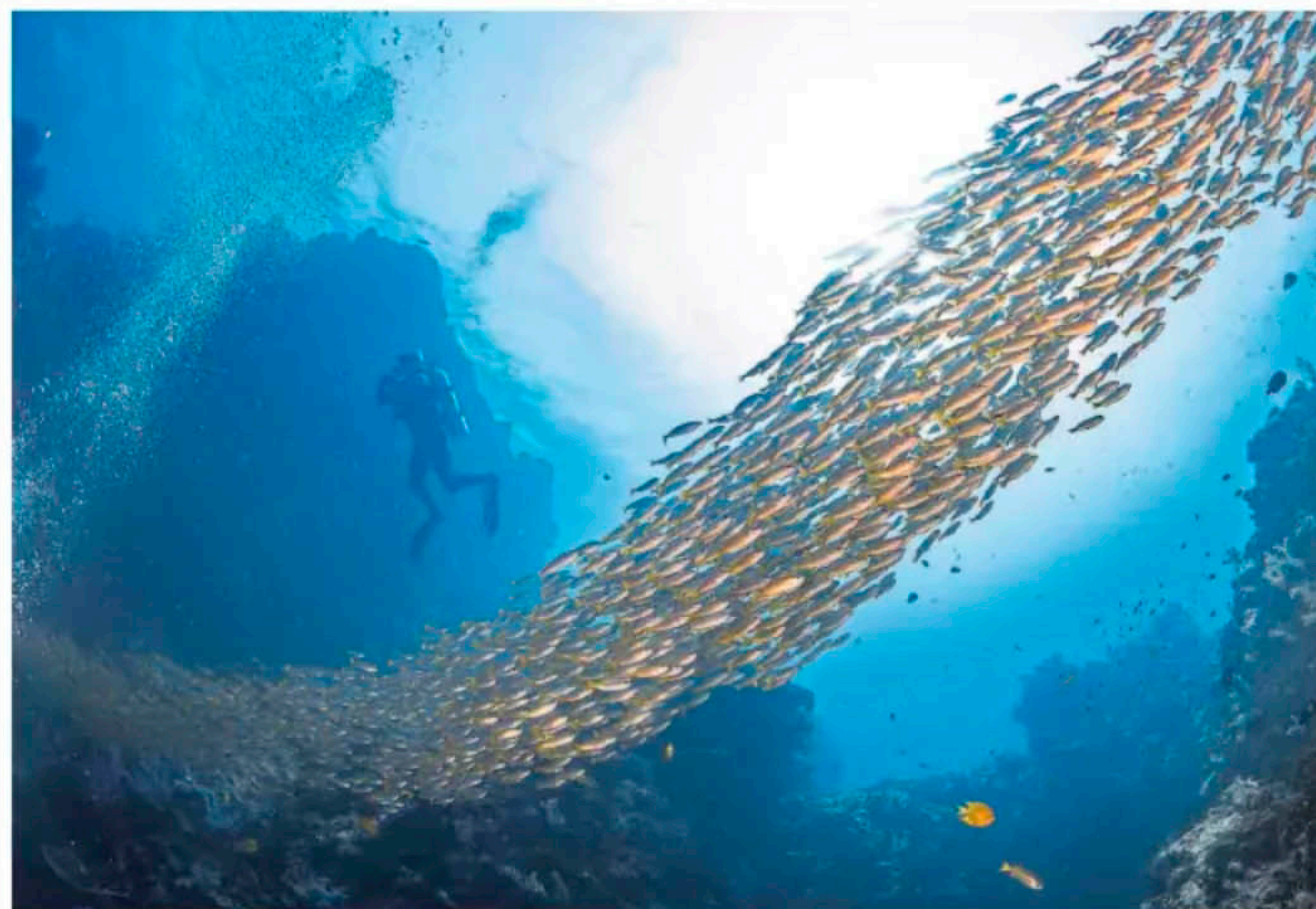
Huge underwater mountain ranges, deep abyssal trenches and strange entities such as Venus's flower basket – whose delicate tissue resembled spun glass – were discovered during the three-and-a-half-year expedition. Once thought to be a uniform watery expanse containing little of interest, the oceans were revealed to be deep, vibrant and filled with wonderful life forms.

That was 150 years ago. Today, the fecundity and majesty of the high seas revealed by Challenger are being destroyed before scientists have had a proper chance to explore their wonders, biologists warn. "Our vast, deep ocean is incredibly fragile and its greatest threat is us," science journalist Olive Heffernan states in this comprehensive and disturbing investigation of the avarice and lawlessness that now afflict our ungoverned oceans.

The speed and scale of the destruction is staggering. Consider deep-sea trawling: huge nets and chains weighing several tonnes are now routinely dragged across the seafloor to sweep up cod, haddock and shrimp. Coral beds are smashed, species left homeless and entire ecosystems wrecked. "It is unclear whether these environments can ever fully recover," says Heffernan.

Then there is deep-sea mining. Corporations are planning to hoover up mineral nodules that litter the seabed. Vast plumes of sediments would be released, along with viruses, microbes and other pollutants. Abyssal ecosystems as yet unstudied by science would be wrecked and species wiped out before we became aware of their existence.

In addition, there is the indiscriminate dumping of waste and the discarding of plastics that choke fish and seabirds. There are pirate fishers who use enslaved crews to catch endangered species and tankers that sink and spill their oil. And then there are the entrepreneurs who want to sprinkle the seas with iron compounds to boost phytoplankton growth and increase their absorption of carbon dioxide, thus helping in the fight against global heating. The fact such interventions would also trigger the widespread growth of poisonous algal blooms is ignored.



***One in every five fish we now eat is caught illegally.*** *Yam Mo/Getty.*

As to the cause of this oceanic crisis, Heffernan is clear. At every turn, politicians have allowed economic gain to be prioritised over sustainability and have created a free-for-all that allows lax enforcement and apathy to remain the status quo. The high seas are the planet's last great commons and weak, poorly enforced international agreements are now permitting their exploitation and destruction by a small group of opportunists.

One in every five fish we now eat is caught illegally, while a mere 20 companies are responsible for more than half the plastic waste that is choking our seas and the creatures that dwell in them. It is a stark, grim story, succinctly told by Heffernan, who struggles hard to find notes of optimism. "This narrative was intended to reassure myself and others that despite our fraught relationship with the ocean, everything will work out fine. But as I sat down to write, I realised my view of the future isn't quite so rosy," she states.

It is hard to disagree. It took men and women a long time to comprehend the wonders of the deep but only a very brief period to begin their destruction. From that perspective, there is little to engender optimism for our short-term future on this planet.

*To order The High Seas for £19.36 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*

Memoir

# Life on the comedy fringe

**Not That I'm Bitter**
**Helen Lederer**
*Mirror, £20, pp288*

Funny woman Helen Lederer honed her craft doing standup on the alternative comedy circuit of the 1980s, sharing bills with the likes of Ben Elton, Rik Mayall and Jenny Eclair, before landing roles in sitcoms including *Girls on Top* and *Absolutely Fabulous*. Since then she's appeared in reality TV shows, pantos, ads. There have also been books, this latest of which strives to explain why, when so many of her contemporaries went on to become household names, Lederer herself still requires an introduction.

A hectic, now-and-again hair-raising survey of her life and career, it begins with a mother who worked at Bletchley during the war only to become trapped by 1950s domesticity, and a Czech-Jewish father who arrived in the UK as a refugee and continually felt the need to earn his place in British society.

Growing up in Eltham, south-east London, Lederer depicts herself as an asthmatic show-off, prone to spilling her milk in hysterics. As she stumbles into young adulthood, there are disturbing episodes as a trainee masseuse and the recipient of after-hours "lessons" from her acting coach.

Certainly, these were different times, which also accounts for the speed pills she takes for dieting and, perhaps, the lack of camaraderie she encounters among female comedians, still few in number back then. Competing with men became harder still after she became a single mother.

She's always in the right place at the wrong time, doing a "singleton" act, for instance, a decade before the advent of Bridget Jones. When she does contrive to be in the right place at the right time, she manages to self-sabotage. Reflecting on it from the "autumn" of her career, mortification and regret remain in plentiful supply, but what she genuinely doesn't evince, her book's title notwithstanding, is bitterness.



*Helen Lederer: 'always in the right place at the wrong time'.*

To the extent that Lederer has gained any insight with age and experience, she's able to see that the sense of not being good enough that has dogged her from childhood is also what drives her to perform. Without it, she might be happier – more successful, possibly – but she'd also never have known the "bliss" that comes from creating laughter in an audience in the first place.

Here is a narrative that is, above all, irrepressibly, unrepentantly funny. This can feel jarring on occasion yet her defence is important – even more so now than when she started out, despite the many changes for the better. As she insists at the end: "Making fun of the bad stuff, and caring about the bad stuff, can be done at the same time." **Hephzibah Anderson**

*To order Not That I'm Bitter for £17.60 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*

## In brief
### by Alexander Larman

**History in the House: Some Remarkable Dons and the Teaching of Politics, Character and Statecraft**
**Richard Davenport-Hines**
*William Collins, £26, pp426*

Christ Church college, Oxford, is inextricably linked with power in Britain, having educated 13 prime ministers and countless cabinet ministers, to say nothing of the machiavellian figures lurking in the shadows. Some of these were the history academics who mentored the future politicians. In his highly informed new study, Richard Davenport-Hines illuminatingly explores the links between privilege and patronage with wit and authority, bringing characters such as the historians Hugh Trevor-Roper and Arthur Hassall to life in fascinating detail.

**Rabbits**
**Hugo Rifkind**
*Birlinn, £14.99, pp352*

Hot on the heels of *Saltburn* and Jonny Sweet's *The Kellerby Code*, Hugo Rifkind's entertaining new novel offers another jaded look at the antics of the posh. His thoroughly middle-class protagonist, Tommo, finds himself sent to a grim, Gordonstoun-esque boarding school, where his peers are all wealthier and more socially comfortable than he is, even if their breeding barely conceals a capacity for violence and chaos. Rifkind keeps the outrageous laughs and twists coming in equal measure.

**Summer in Baden-Baden**
**Leonid Tsypkin**
*Faber, £9.99, pp240 (paperback)*

Leonid Tsypkin, born in Soviet-era Belarus, has never had the reception that his work has deserved in the west, but this reissue of his most famous novel should redress that. Sensitively translated by Roger and Angela Keys, Tsypkin's fictionalised account of Dostoevsky's stay in Germany in 1867 is shot through with wit and poetic imagination. It daringly conflates incidents from Dostoevsky's life and fiction into the narrative, turning it into a kaleidoscopic reverie.

*To order History in the House for £22.88, Rabbits for £13.19 or Summer in Baden-Baden for £9.29 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*



*'Both ultra-secretive and publicity hungry': a member of the Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas.* Mahmud Hams/AFP/Getty

Middle East

# The Hamas men behind the masks

*In this update of their 2010 survey of the Islamist movement, Beverley Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell argue that violent struggle with Israel is a major part of the group's identity, but not its only goal, writes* Daniel Hilton

**Hamas: The Quest for Power**
**Beverley Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell**
*Polity, £17.99, pp340*

Six weeks after the attacks of 7 October, with a punishing war in full swing, Jordan's deputy prime minister issued a warning. "Hamas is an idea," Ayman Safadi said. "It cannot be bombed out of existence." Despite seven months of bombardment – or perhaps because of it – Hamas is today one of the most important nationalist and Islamic movements in the world. Its enemies denounce it as the equivalent of Islamic State. Its supporters call it "the resistance".

An offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood that emerged from the refugee camps of Gaza in the 1980s, Hamas is an armed movement that seeks an independent and Islamic Palestinian state free from Israeli occupation. Its founders were children of the Nakba, the Palestinian "catastrophe", when about 750,000 people were forced from their homes in 1948 during the war that created Israel.

Though Hamas leaders first wanted to sow a "social jihad", Islamising society to achieve their aims, the group embraced violence in the first intifada, seeing an opportunity to upstage Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation and seize control of the uprising.

Its tactics have changed over the decades, but its ultimate aim has not. Hamas has used suicide bombers, rocket fire and even the ballot box to fight Israel and take power. In 2006 it won Palestine's most recent elections. A year later, it seized control of the Gaza Strip. And last October, it staged an attack on southern Israeli communities in which it killed more than 1,100 people and took 240 others hostage. "Hamas can be excoriated," warn Beverley Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell, "but it should not be underestimated."

Milton-Edwards is a specialist in political Islam and the armed movements that grew out of it, and her advice has been sought on Middle Eastern security issues by a range of governments. Farrell, meanwhile, is a Reuters journalist with decades of crisis and conflict experience. Previously a Jerusalem bureau chief, he has himself been kidnapped by militant groups.

Part history, part analysis, *Hamas: The Quest for Power* draws from the authors' first-hand, on-the-ground research and reporting. Originally published in 2010 in the wake of Operation Cast Lead, a three-week war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, this edition has been revised and updated throughout.

Milton-Edwards and Farrell interview Hamas figures of all levels of seniority. Some, such as Beirut-based leader Saleh al-Arouri, have since been assassinated.

Yahya Sinwar, the top Hamas leader in Gaza, now hidden in a labyrinth of tunnels and agonisingly out of reach for Israel's military, meets one of the authors after his release from Israeli prison in 2011. Sinwar is said to have risen to prominence by rooting out collaborators before spending 22 years behind bars – time, he says, spent studying Hebrew and his enemy. "I am a specialist in the Jewish people's history, more than many of them," he says.

There are also encounters with Abu Obaida, the spokesperson for the Hamas military wing. His video statements on the latest developments in Gaza have made him the face of Hamas's war – though a concealed one. He is known in Arabic as "the masked one", notorious for always obscuring his face behind a red chequered keffiyeh twisted around his head. "It was difficult to know if it was always the same person or sometimes a body double," the authors write.

Violent opposition to Israel is baked into the group's identity, but is not, the authors argue, its raison d'etre. Do not mistake a milestone for a destination, they warn. To establish an Islamic Palestinian state, the ideologies of secular and leftist movements must be fought as well.

From the outside, Hamas can seem paradoxical. Its 1988 founding charter is laced with blatant antisemitism, but its leaders met Israeli counterparts and proposed recognising Israel on its 1948 borders long before its secular rivals in the PLO. When Hamas decided to participate in the electoral system set up by the Oslo accords peace process, "its embrace of the ballot was intended not to end the violence but to ensure its continuance", the authors write. Its military wing, the Qassam brigades, they note, is "at the same time both ultra-secretive and publicity hungry".

The authors detail interesting tensions within the Qassam brigades soon after Hamas took control of Gaza. Mohammed Deif, the brigades' shadowy leader and the architect of 7 October, returned to Gaza in 2007 to confront his "radical" lieutenants, who had gained power as he recovered from an Israeli attack. In private, the authors report, Deif bemoaned the growing Salafist radicalisation of his rivals, which he feared could be reputationally ruinous for Hamas by linking it to terror group al-Qaida.

The book traverses the movement's history at pace, pausing occasionally for chapters that delve into specifics, such as its attitude to women, whom Hamas insists are involved in every level, but are also defined "principally through a biological function as 'makers of men'".

Hamas's victory in the 2006 Palestinian elections was a watershed moment, creating a crisis by taking over Oslo-built, western-backed quasi-state institutions it had long undermined. Here, the authors credit Fatah ineptitude for the victory as much as Hamas's potent organisational skills, though perhaps underplay its deft pivot to domestic issues such as corruption, welfare and service delivery.

They make a compelling argument that Hamas's rise was aided by Israeli complacency, if not complicity. In the late 80s and early 90s, a blind eye was turned to inflows of cash from supporters abroad, and Hamas's social projects operated undisturbed. Similarly, prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has reportedly boasted that allowing Qatar to fund Hamas helped undermine the Palestinian national project by stoking divisions and separating authorities in the West Bank from Gaza. For Israeli critics of Netanyahu's government, 7 October proved this policy a disaster.

When it comes to those Hamas-led attacks, the authors sensitively tiptoe through contrasting and highly charged narratives, balancing allegations and facts. The most brutal details are left to descriptions of bodycam videos taken from the bodies of slain Qassam fighters.

Before 7 October, the Palestinian national project was listing. A number of Arab countries had signed US-sponsored deals to recognise Israel, with Saudi Arabia expected to be next, dashing hopes of a region-wide peace agreement. Palestinian officials in the West Bank were seen as venal, at best, collaborators at worst, authorities whose security

*The authors sensitively tiptoe through contrasting narratives, balancing allegations and facts*

forces were working in lockstep with the Israeli military to enforce the occupation.

As intended, Milton-Edwards and Farrell write, Hamas's attacks "shattered the status quo" and "smashed the myths that had scaffolded" the PLO's political existence since Oslo. Inertia and relations with intransigent Israeli governments had yielded no progress towards independence for decades. The attacks also precipitated a war in which Israel has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians so far. Still, some opinion polls suggest enduring Palestinian support for the group. Though that may seem like another Hamas paradox, the values of steadfastness (*sumud*) and resistance (*muqawama*) in the face of an overwhelming Israeli enemy remain appealing. "Hamas has operated on a working assumption," write the authors. "When Palestine burns, its support grows."

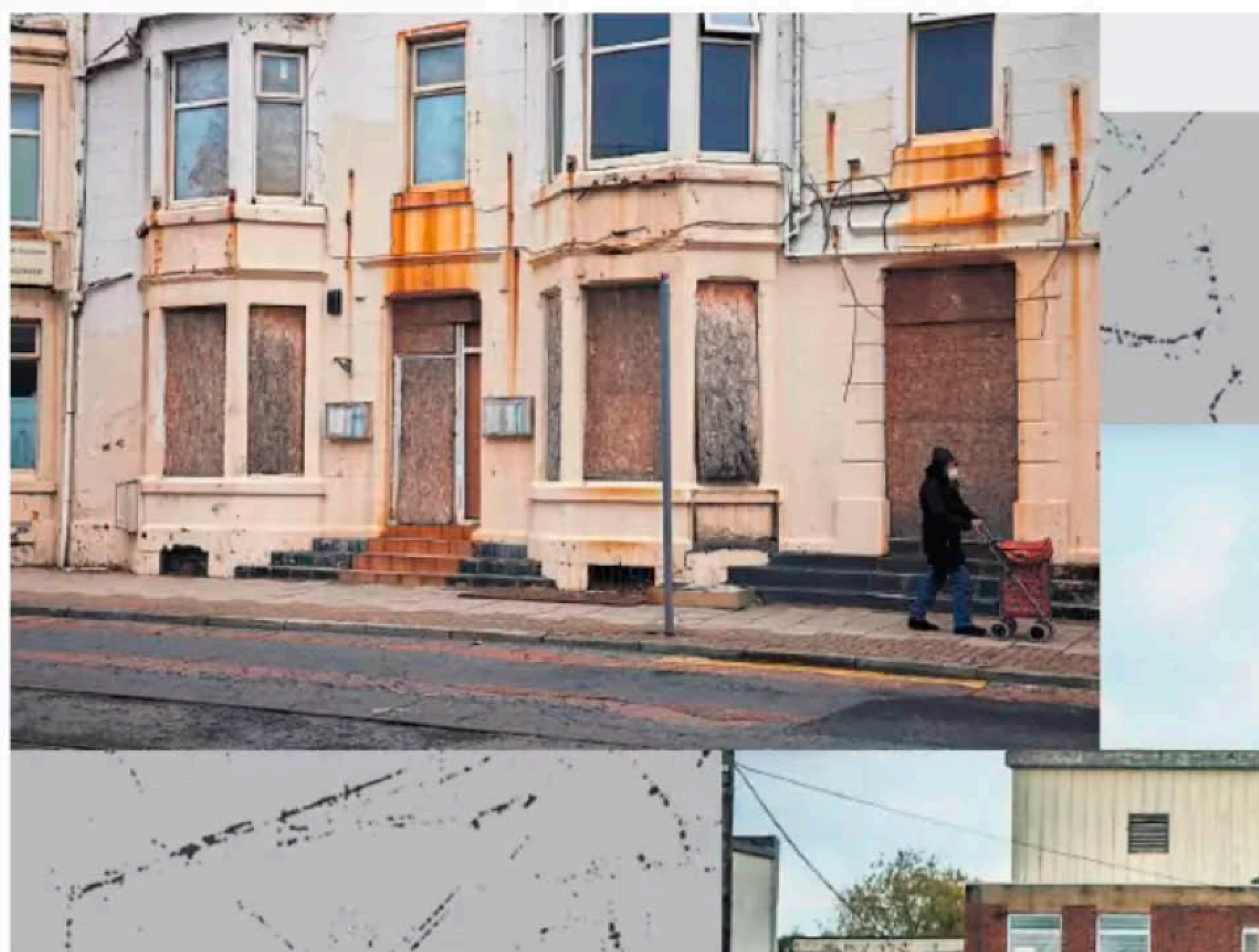
*Daniel Hilton is head of news at Middle East Eye. To order Hamas for £15.83 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*

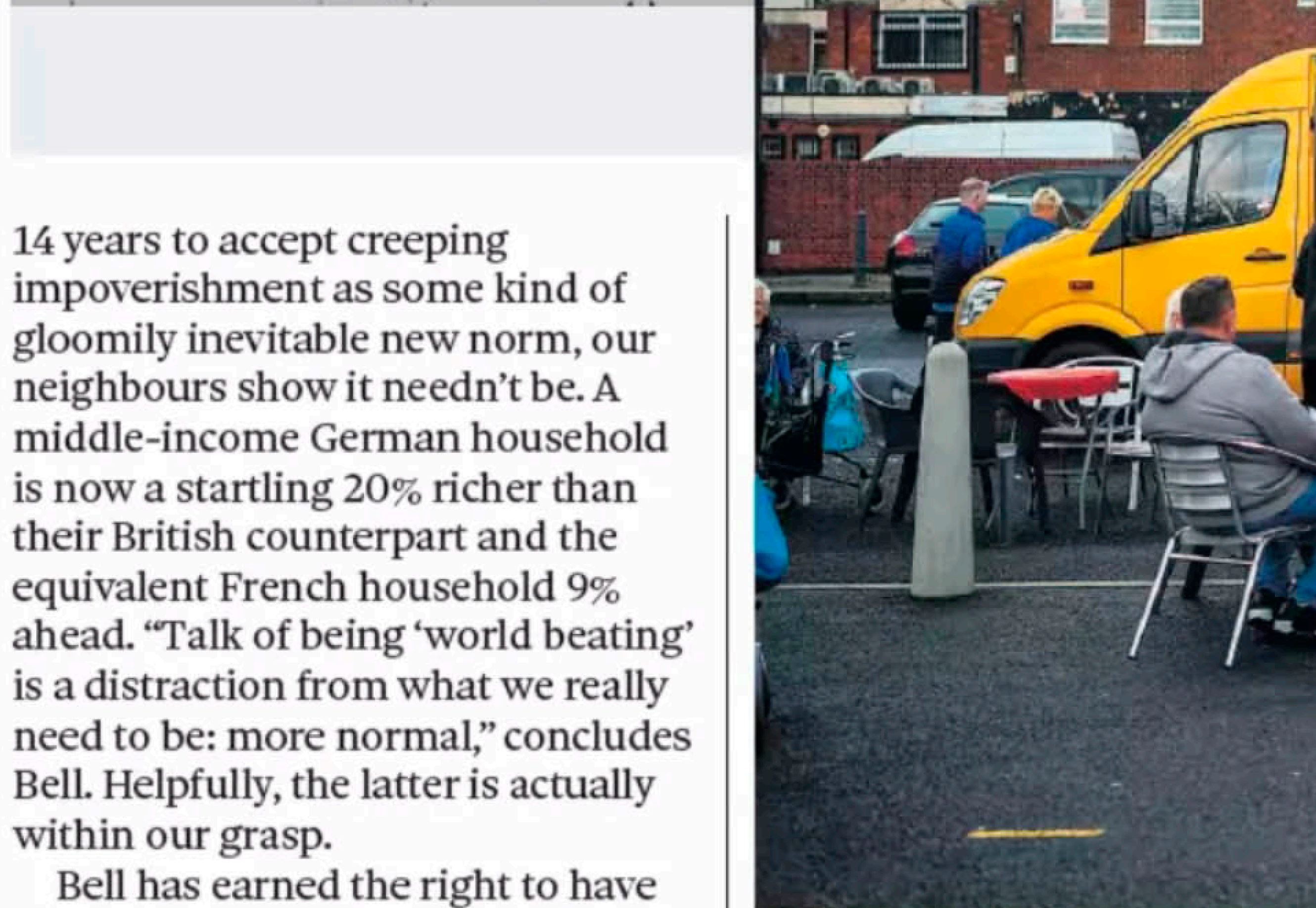
Society

# A roadmap to the new normal

*Underlining his credentials as a creative thinker, Torsten Bell, the economist and Labour candidate for Swansea West, offers a hopeful vision of the nation's future – spurning leftwing utopianism as well as tackling 14 years of creeping decline. By Gaby Hinsliff*










**Great Britain? How We Get Our Future Back**
**Torsten Bell**
*Bodley Head, £20, pp304*

As proposed national rallying cries go, perhaps this one lacks swagger. But its modesty is deliberate, as the economist and *Observer* columnist Torsten Bell's surprisingly hopeful new guide to halting this country's crumbling decline explains. Chest-beating political promises to put the Great back into Great Britain are, he writes, really just distracting from the real issue, which is that the British are exceptional all right – only not in a good way. We stand out from our pack of medium-sized, richer-than-average countries for our low productivity, chronic wage stagnation and American-style high inequality (but sadly without the higher growth of the US).

We have truly world-beating housing costs, higher than any other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country but Finland, but magically still deliver less living space per capita in return than famously cramped New York; we boast, if that's the word, fewer hospital beds than all bar one other OECD nation.

Yet while Brits have somehow been conditioned over the past 14 years to accept creeping impoverishment as some kind of gloomily inevitable new norm, our neighbours show it needn't be. A middle-income German household is now a startling 20% richer than their British counterpart and the equivalent French household 9% ahead. "Talk of being 'world beating' is a distraction from what we really need to be: more normal," concludes Bell. Helpfully, the latter is actually within our grasp.

Bell has earned the right to have this argument taken seriously. A former adviser to the then chancellor Alistair Darling and then Labour leader Ed Miliband, he's a creative thinker whose ideas are often ahead of his time and focus on those others overlook: low and middle-income earners, not the wealthier middle classes, and renters, not homeowners. As chief executive of the left-leaning Resolution Foundation thinktank, he deepened public understanding of insecure "squeezed middle" lives and helped design the Covid furlough scheme that saved countless jobs.

He is now standing for the safe Labour seat of Swansea West, though few expect him to spend long in backbench obscurity, which makes this book required reading for the new intake. But its real achievement is in creating what he calls some "hardheaded believable hope" of better days ahead, at a time when some – especially on the more disgruntled left – have virtually given up on Labour making a difference in government.

That hope matters, he argues. Chronic low growth and the shoddy public services it affords, over time, erode people's faith in the state to do better, pushing them towards extreme political solutions. The risk is of a broken economy in turn breaking politics itself.

His analysis of how Britain came off the rails is even-handed, heaping scorn on George Osborne's austerity era but noting that wage growth started faltering while New Labour was in office. While acknowledging the damage done by Brexit, he identifies the stubborn productivity gap between Britain and countries such as France or Germany as the biggest real drag on growth.

He's no keener on dreamy leftwing utopianism than empty rightwing boosterism, taking issue with both the campaign for a universal basic income (UBI) and the anti-capitalist writer David Graeber's popular "bullshit jobs" thesis, which argued that too many jobs in the modern economy are pointless, paper-shuffling make-work designed to keep the masses distracted. (UBI is too expensive if it's generous enough to ensure nobody now on benefits loses out, he argues, but positively damaging otherwise; meanwhile, research shows a cheering number of Britons find their work meaningful or socially useful.)

But he's also clear that simply

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Fiction

# Mad about the boy

**Going Home**
**Tom Lamont**
*Sceptre, £16.99, pp320*

Charm is an underrated quality in fiction, perhaps because it's seen as a soft power, unlike supposedly more rigorous features such as plot and structure. It comes from an alchemical blend of elements including voice and character, and Tom Lamont's debut novel, set in the Jewish community in Enfield, north London, has charm to burn.

Largely, this comes from the central character, a two-year-old boy named Joel, whose scattershot viewpoint opens the book. "He collects answers to your questions. Joel Woods. Two! Salt-and-vinegar flavour." He's playing in the park and the voice sketches his distractible vision ("Joel saw another bird. Right, you") while dealing just enough information to the reader.

Best of all, Lamont – an award-winning *Observer* and *Guardian* journalist before turning to fiction – rations Joel's appearances carefully and we don't get his viewpoint for the rest of the novel. He remains the central character, however, simply because the four people we do hear from are all focused on him.

First come Téo Erskine and his father, Vic. Téo is a young man who has come back to Enfield to see his dad, who's living with a degenerative condition. "One of the surname illnesses. Your slow declines." Téo used to go to school with Lia, Joel's single mother, and is still sweet on her. He babysits Joel for her sometimes, less out of altruism than hoping Lia will be impressed with "the value he was demonstrating".

Lia sees Téo as responsible – a planner and a plodder – so she may never see him any other way. His friend and opposite is Ben Mossam, a rich kid whose parents moved away and left him their big house; he can afford to be impetuous. He wears a yarmulke not because he is a particularly observant Jew but because "he appreciated how it made women curious, and how it put men on their guard". (Oddly, the words jew and jewish in the novel are presented thus, and never capitalised.)

The story cycles between Téo, Vic, Ben and Sibyl, a new local rabbi, and the story has so many developments that it's impossible for a reviewer to go far into the plot. But Joel stays with Téo longer than expected and the meat of the book is their growing relationship, both aided and impeded by Vic, Ben and Sibyl. Vic's sections are among the strongest, portraying his own masculine upbringing as well as offering one of the book's more surprising hairpin bends. Ben is harder for Lamont to animate, given his shtick is to be smug and broadly unsympathetic.

Along the way we get nice observations on modern life ("people were coming out of the cafe holding [...] sensational coffees, comedy coffees, too heavy to lift one-handed"), but the book always springs to life when Joel is on the page, whether sweetly articulating himself while playing I-spy ("something beginner will ... blue") or giving the other characters perspective. "Joel viewed anybody




*'Difficult times': (far left-right) the Bloomfield area of Blackpool; a mobile cafe in Wolverhampton; homeless people in Piccadilly Circus, London.* *Christopher Thomond/Guardian; Christopher Furlong/Getty; Mike Kemp/In Pictures/Getty*

offering more stability – shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves's watchword – after years of chaos won't be enough to unlock the investment businesses need to be more productive, and that there's no avoiding the need for "wrestling with and rewiring parts of our capitalism". Britain's parlous state now, he argues, makes the case for things that seemed too radical in 1997.

There are original ideas here for everything from helping the low-paid build up emergency savings to making shiftwork less precarious, and perhaps most radically, for shifting the burden of tax from income to wealth. Raising income tax by 5p would cover the costs of scrapping the 8p national insurance rate entirely, Bell writes, leaving most workers instantly better off; the corresponding hit would be taken by landlords, richer pensioners and people earning money from dividends, all of whom draw income that attracts tax but not NI. Yet if the economics is persuasive, what the book lacks is arguably more politics.

Many of his big remedies are things that successive governments knew full well needed doing, such as building more houses or revaluing council tax, but have ducked for fear of a public backlash. While advocating what he calls "radical incrementalism", or slow but steady progress towards big changes, Bell offers few answers to the question of how to get elected while promising, for example, wealth taxes likely to spook millions of older homeowners sitting on that wealth. (Presumably, his opponents are even now filleting the book for lines to use against him in Swansea West.)

But overall this is an incisive, upbeat vision of how a Labour government could turn things around even in difficult times. The one good thing about Britain digging itself into a hole, he notes, is that we could deliver a surprising amount of growth just by catching up to where we should be. Or in other words, the advantage of doing this badly is that things can – to misquote D:Ream – surprisingly swiftly get better.

*To order Great Britain? for £17 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*



*'Charm to burn': Tom Lamont.* *Suki Dhanda/Observer*

older, taller, as expert. [He] was the only person in Vic's life who didn't hold his illness against him."

And all the while, each character accelerates towards the end of their own story and all four head for a convergence. There are moments along the way that strain plausibility, but these don't seem to matter in a book that succeeds so strongly through its charm and its heart. **John Self**

*To order Going Home for £14.95 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*



*Never a drag: Lynn Barber and David Hockney share a fag break in London in 2008.* *Sophia Evans/Observer*

**Art**

# Portraits of the artists as party animals

*Star interviewer, provoker of the Chapman brothers and the woman who made Howard Hodgkin cry… Lynn Barber's book about her obsession with artists – particularly those who smoke – is wonderfully entertaining, writes* Stephen Smith

**A Little Art Education**
**Lynn Barber**
*Cheerio, £15, pp130*

Ernest Hemingway, who knew a lot of artists, said the essential gift for a writer was a bullshit detector, and Lynn Barber's crackles and wows like a Geiger counter during her adventures in the art world. The author of *An Education*, which was made into a film starring Carey Mulligan, Barber is also Fleet Street's deadeye interviewer, who has drawn a bead on painters from Salvador Dalí to Sir David Hockney and Tracey Emin. Of her encounters with the young British artists or YBAs, she says: "The last thing on Earth I wanted to hear was their theory of art or the sort of bollocks they put in art catalogues." When she was a judge of the Turner prize in 2006, Barber praised one shortlisted finalist as a "beautiful colourist", only to discover that this was a pant-wetting solecism as far as her fellow jurists were concerned: "beautiful is a despised word in artspeak", she adds in mock self-reproach. Her relations with the Chapman brothers were strained after Barber dared to ask if there was a connection between the genetic mutations in their artworks and Dinos Chapman's own "deformed" hands (he had arthritis). The brothers called her fascist, bourgeois and stupid. She eventually made up with Dinos's brother, Jake, and reveals that he is planning to row the Atlantic. "I warmly hope he survives," she says, making this pleasantry sound bracingly wintry.

With so much about the art scene likely to press Barber's anti-BS buttons, you might wonder why she bothers to write about it at all. The answer is that she's passionately fond of art and certain artists, as much as she is passionately unfond of others. "I hugely admire artists for their willingness to take risks and trust their whole future to their own creativity," she says. "They have this consuming passion that will last them all their lives." Not only that, but they throw the best parties.

> *'The last thing on Earth I wanted to hear was their theory of art or the sort of bollocks they put in catalogues'*

In a long career, including a distinguished stint on this newspaper, Barber made it a rule to interview an artist for every dozen or so showbiz types she was sent to meet. If you thought she had a low opinion of certain painters, wait until you hear her on the acting profession: "I enjoyed interviewing artists a million times more than actors." That's saying something, because Barber finds the sculptor Rachel Whiteread "arrogant", the late painter Gillian Ayres "a difficult interviewee" and makes the then 67-year-old Howard Hodgkin burst into tears. And these are all artists she liked.

Art's 1% move around the globe spritzed with flattery and hyperbole, and not all of them can resist it. Barber has no patience with any of that. She failed art O-level and has never studied the subject. She could have mugged it up from books, she admits, but prefers to see her ignorance as an asset. "With art, I can respond completely spontaneously – I like it, I don't like it… we should always listen to our gut feelings." Despite or perhaps because of this, Barber not only got the goods from some of the biggest names in art, but became friends with several of them too. She may be the last hack still working who effects an introduction with a packet of ciggies. It's striking that many of her conquests are partial to a gasper: Hockney, Maggi Hambling, Sarah Lucas.

Her portraits of the artists pick out details that others miss. She recounts an unlikely connection between Hockney and Nigel Farage: Barber saw them both at the same pro-smoking event. In a sensitive and affectionate study of Emin, she says that when the artist set her heart on moving into a desirable London square, she had an estate agent put notes through every letterbox encouraging the owners to sell up. It isn't everyone who could include tales like that and expect to stay friends with Emin. This material might not be the stuff of artists' monographs, but it will intrigue biographers, all the same.

*A Little Art Education* is a slim book, nicely packaged and illustrated, but poorly typeset. Much more seriously – in fact, downright bafflingly – none of Barber's original interviews with the artists are reproduced. Readers will have to search for them online. Perhaps it's to do with questions of space or rights, but the book only tells part of the story. It's like having a ticket to an exhibition and finding nothing on the walls except eye-catching but empty frames.

*Stephen Smith is a journalist and broadcaster. To order A Little Art Education for £13.20 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*

Crime and thrilers of the month

# Take a very deep breath...

*Deep-sea divers feel the pressure, Stephen King returns with some masterly tales – and a Dorset resort isn't as restful as it seems. By Alison Flood*

A thriller plot line is barely needed in Will Dean's **The Chamber** (Hodder & Stoughton); the real-life terrors of the world he describes are enough to have any even vaguely claustrophobic heart racing. Dean, the author of the excellent Tuva Moodyson thrillers as well as a handful of standalone novels, sets his latest in the world of saturation diving in the early 00s. Here, deep sea divers work at more than 100 metres below sea level, living for up to a month in a pressurised, immensely cramped environment and breathing a mix of helium and oxygen so they can continue diving at depth without needing to decompress and thus risk nitrogen narcosis (the bends). Dean's protagonist is Ellen Brooke, one of the few female saturation divers; she and five others will live for a month in a chamber "about the size of the back section of a bus" while they take shifts diving beneath the North Sea, fixing oil pipes. But then one of them dies. And then another. Are the people providing them with food and gases to breathe harming them? "In some ways, this is similar to an academic experiment that got out of hand: the lack of control we have, and the enormous list of ways in which they could inflict harm upon us if they so desired." Or is the danger inside the chamber? As those in charge start the days-long decompression process, Ellen and her colleagues try to survive. "One might be an accident," she writes on a piece of paper. "Two is a crime." Claustrophobically compulsive.

"You like it darker? Fine. So do I," writes Stephen King in the afterword to a new collection of short stories, **You Like It Darker** (Hodder & Stoughton), which range from the deliciously creepy (Willie the Weirdo, reminiscent of one of King's best short stories, Gramma), to novels-in-miniature. Danny Coughlin's Bad Dream is one of the latter. The premise is a paranormal twist: a man has one prescient dream, and discovers where a body was buried. As his efforts to let the truth be known backfire on him and spin out of control, this becomes a gripping story of an obsessively dangerous cop. My favourite, though, is Rattlesnakes, which made me jump for joy with its links to two previous King novels (no spoilers here, because it was too much fun to discover), while also chilling me to the bone. "Dusk, you know. Real things seem thinner then, at least to me." Some of these tales are supernatural; some are not; many feature older protagonists; all are worth a read, as King continues his self-described project to "show the real world as it is, and to tell the truth about the America I know and love".



*Will Dean's The Chamber is 'claustrophobically compulsive'. Mike Mareen/Getty*

Isobel Shirlaw's **A Proper Mother** (Point Blank) opens in August 1974, as Frankie and Callum are on their honeymoon in Greece. Things aren't quite right between them, though; a palm reading upsets Frankie, and Callum is often unkind to her. Shirlaw goes on to move her story back and forth in time, showing the misery of Frankie's early motherhood, slowly uncovering the terrible things that have happened to her during her marriage; then, later, struggling to form a relationship with her second son, Michael; then as a young mother, unable to bond with him, looking away from "those pebbly grey eyes that never seemed to reflect the light truthfully". This is pitched as a cross between *Don't Look Now* and *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, and it is certainly possible to see the comparison to the latter, to ask, along with Frankie, if there is really a darkness at the heart of Michael.

But it is a more tender book, too, inching the curtain back on what lies behind Frankie's misery. Shirlaw is scarily good at showing the little cruelties that have played out in her life. "Callum was right; whatever shade she tried, lipstick always aged her," Frankie thinks. Later, Callum comes to visit and cuts down all the flowers in her garden. There is a feeling of dread as you read on – will Frankie escape the net that has been woven for her or is it pulled too tight?

Lucy Foley is queen of the locked room mystery in an exclusive setting, from *The Hunting Party* to *The Guest List*. In her latest, **The Midnight Feast** (HarperCollins), a new retreat has just opened on the Dorset coast. It is run by Francesca Meadows, the sort of person aiming for a "curated, experiential" feel for her guests, who thinks things like "of course what shines from within is most important, but dermal fillers have their role too". She's a lot of eyeroll-inducing fun. But after a luxurious midnight feast over the summer solstice, the next morning a body is found. We see from the perspectives of Francesca and her new husband, Owen, guest Bella and local boy Eddie, as the crimes of the past come to light, and the local pagan legend of the Birds, and the hold it has over the land Francesca has built her luxury retreat on, becomes clear. A fun and pacey summer thriller.

*To order any of these titles for a special price go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*



Fiction

## Looking for a life beyond Fife

**Only Here, Only Now**
**Tom Newlands**
*Orion, £18.99, pp400*

Tom Newlands may make several prize lists for his stunning debut, a portrait of a teenager with undiagnosed ADHD in a working-class, post-industrial community in Scotland. Newlands, who is himself neurodivergent, says he opted for a female perspective because he "wanted to tell the story of a young girl at odds with this male environment".

*Only Here, Only Now* begins in 1994. Fourteen-year-old Cora lives with her mum on a council estate in Muircross, a fictional seaside town in Fife, and dreams of carving out a life for herself in Glasgow. When her mother brings home a new boyfriend, one-eyed Gunner, he changes the family dynamic. We follow Cora over the next four years, her struggles at school and uneasy relationship with her "stepda". Newlands's impulsive, bold protagonist, who dreams big despite having very little, is richly layered, and he conveys her disorientation as she tries to make sense of her actions.

This sprawling coming-of-age tale explores poverty, belonging, grief and rage, and Newlands writes with such visceral energy that his book, though bleak, is hard to put down. His description of Muircross, for instance, introduces us to Cora's distinctive voice and places her in the landscape: "It was a manky wee hellhole sat out by itself on a lump of coast the shape of a chicken nugget, surrounded by pylons and filled with moonhowlers and old folk and seagulls the size of ironing boards that shat over everything. Chaos and fighting and shite in your fringe. That was Muircross."

Cora's hyperactivity is captured in equally vivid prose ("There was a tingling round my skull. Techno in my ribcage"), while the liberal use of vernacular – "greeting", "a beamer", "boke" – immerses us in her world. But what impresses most is the author's compassion for his flawed characters. There's humour as well as love, hope and resilience amidst the ugliness in this accomplished novel. Lucy Popescu

*To order Only Here, Only Now for £16.71 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*

# Lorrie Moore
# 'I identify with Beth in Little Women, who dies'

*The acclaimed American author on the humour, horror and anger in her latest novel, what she would have as her epitaph and the writers she most admires. By Kate Kellaway*



**The books interview**

*'Understanding someone 100% is probably an illusion': Lorrie Moore photographed at the American Academy in Berlin in 2023. Annette Hornischer*

Lorrie Moore, 67, is one of America's most original, agile and diverting authors – a short story writer, novelist, critic and essayist. *I Am Homeless If This Is Not My Home*, her fourth novel, is possessed of a feral magic and is a fantastic provocation. Sad, funny and teasingly gothic, it introduces Finn, who is a lovable oddball, along with his mentally vulnerable, wildly charming and recently deceased ex-partner, Lily, who comes back into his life – and her own – in the most unexpected way.

**Are you as good at amusing yourself as you are at amusing us? Your novel made me laugh aloud…**
Like the author, a narrative has to breathe. Moments that are amusing within the story are like moments in life itself: a bit of oxygen in case the rest is getting too glassy or overheated. I discover moments at my desk as I go along and, sometimes, I do amuse myself. I'm glad you laughed because a lot of the story is full of despair.

**I see that but am tempted to believe – to corrupt Philip Larkin's famous line – that what will survive of us is not love but jokes. Yet, comedy aside, how much do you torment yourself as a writer – would you describe yourself as neurotic, self-doubting, or none of the above?**
As a writer, I'm really not sure. I'm a little tormented in the time-management department. And as a housekeeper, I'm definitely tormented. But neurotic comes on a spectrum I assume we are all on somewhere.

**Inspired by your plot, I find myself wanting to ask if there is a sense in which we carry the dead with us – departed friends and family?**
Yes, I imagine we carry the dead around with us constantly. And sometimes it is out of missing them but probably it is also out of disbelief that they're no longer alive. That was why I made Finn a doubter of official stories in other categories as well.

**I love Finn's doubt and hugely relished the epitaph you proposed for his tombstone: "Well, that was weird." And here is a tricky question for you – could you offer me an epitaph for yourself?**
"Books available!"

**You have an affectionate, penetrating and unafraid take on madness and find in Lily a self-destructive charisma – have you come across Lilys in your own life?**
Well, Lily is an invention designed for Finn, who is also an invention. But that is not to say that there are not impossible people in my life. But then again, everyone has those (books available!).

**On the subject of madness, I keep sensing your wish to make this most human of afflictions more openly understood and (literally even) embraced?**
With regard to the Finn-Lily relationship, Finn loves Lily but without understanding her completely. That may always be the way. Understanding someone 100% is probably an illusion. And madness can be seen as a stand-in term for the parts you don't comprehend. I think those who suffer from madness know they are not completely known.

**Was it a challenge to get the tenderly macabre tone of the book to stay tender and not flip into the ghoulish?**
Tenderness is, I suppose, the driving force and everything else – the humour, the horror, the anger, the southern gothic – festoons it.

**At the same time, you are so spot-on about the possible difficulty of talking to the terminally ill – as if death were potentially a social embarrassment?**
People want to say exactly the right thing to make up for lost time while the clock is maniacally ticking. It is a form of performance anxiety but much deeper in most cases: a desire to bring the profoundly inner to the outward exchange – yet with unconfident skills and rusty tools. Or tools still sealed in plastic and cardboard.

**How much, if at all, do you think your writing has changed over 30 years or more?**
I have no idea how my writing has changed because I haven't gone back and studied it. I hope it's got better, but if not, I'd rather not know. I also suppose the changes in one's work reflect the changes in one's self, one's life, as well as changes in the world.

**And that pre-empts what I was about to ask next: how much have you changed yourself since you started your career?**
My cooking skills have probably declined – I grow bored chopping things and so now avail myself of pre-chopped produce. I fear this is a metaphor for shortage of time and energy and elegance and deep, underlying commitment. I used only to sit in rocking chairs if I were holding a baby that needed rocking. Now all I require is a glass of wine and a televised weather report. I have crossed things off my bucket list not because I have now done them but because I know I never will. So I've not really improved. But I could still turn things around, I think. That said, very little in this novel is pre-chopped.

*'I have crossed things off my bucket list not because I have now done them but because I know I never will'*

**What's the last really great book you read?**
Well, I teach, so I've had Alice Munro and Edward P Jones on my syllabus. Those would constitute great books – *All Aunt Hagar's Children* and Munro's *Selected Stories*.

**What do you read when times are hard – for boosting or consolation or amusement?**
I tend not to reread when times are hard. I feel that one must find something new. So here are two new books I found to be good company: Lauren Oyler's *No Judgement* and Miranda July's new novel, *All Fours*.

**How do you organise your books?**
Alphabetically and by genre.

**And what are you planning to read next?**
I'm going through Jenny Erpenbeck's books, one by one.

**Is there any fictional character with whom you particularly identify? Go back to childhood reading if you prefer…**
Everyone identifies with Jo in *Little Women*. I identify with Beth, the sickly sister who dies. Also? Bambi's mother.

*I Am Homeless If This Is Not My Home is published by Faber (£9.99). To order a copy for £9.29 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 020-3176 3837*

# Puzzles

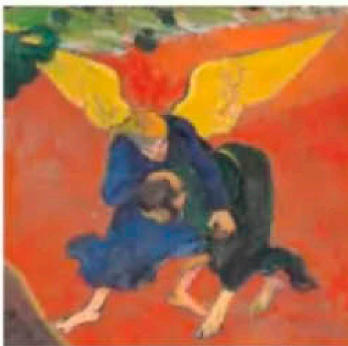
## Guess the painting by Laura Cumming



**This week's question:** Who is painting what (above)? Answer next Sunday.

Last week's detail (below) came from one of the most outlandish works ever painted by Gauguin, strangest of modernist French masters. *Vision of the Sermon (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel)* was made in Pont-Aven, Brittany, in 1888. It shows a row of Breton women's heads in their curious white bonnets framing a bizarre wrestling match. Jacob is not necessarily winning against his opponent, and together they appear like a winged insect with four legs, against the throbbing crimson of the French ground. Gauguin wrote to Van Gogh that for him "the landscape and the angel only exist in the imagination of the people praying".



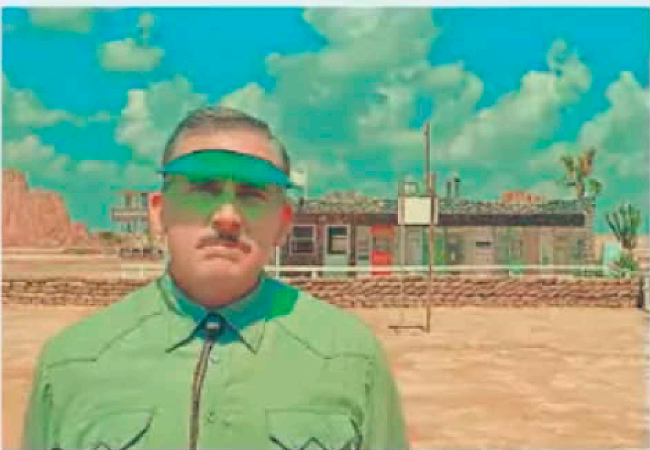


## Cinema Connect

Each week we show three stills. Guess the films in question and the female actor who connects them. (Bonus point if you can put them in chronological order.)

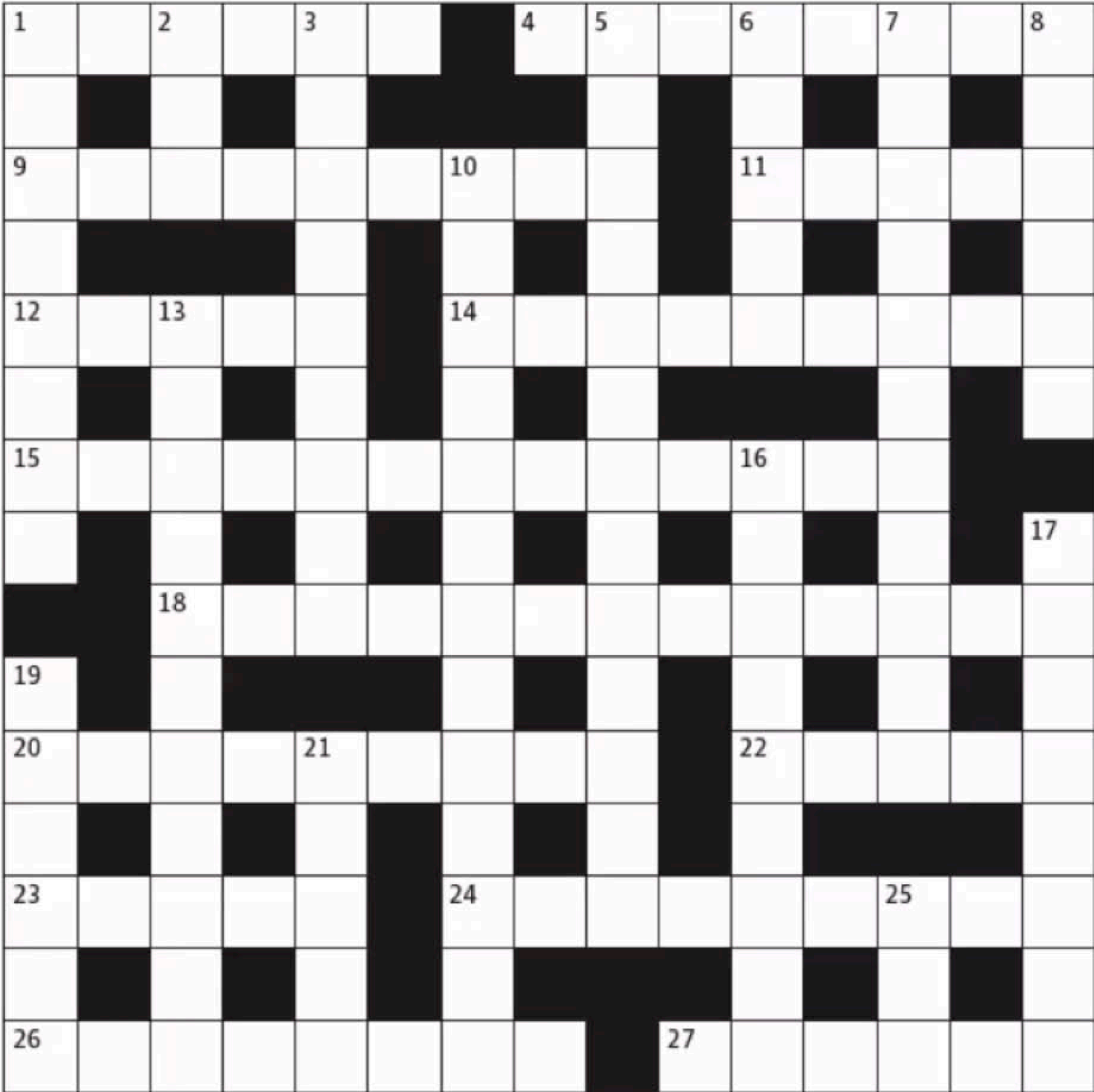






Set by Killian Fox
Answers on page 47

## Everyman crossword No.4,051



### Across

1 Topless stunts engrossing husband in dockers' milieu (6)
4 It must be approximately a foot in length (4,4)
9 Again give credence to description of Navy Seals outfit? (9)
11 Somewhat anti-German, this beast (5)
12 Non-drinker wearing beam? No: irritable! (5)
14 Having chewed escallops, comes to premature end (9)
15 Standard wedding feature in Britain: bold drunkard, first to trip (8,5)
18 Avoiding adventurousness, having eaten dishes of bananas (2,3,4,4)
20 Looking up and swearing (9)
22 Stiff clothing Everyman had (5)
23 Primarily antisocial, leerily offish or frosty? (5)
24 Showed approval of France (wasn't paying attention) (6,3)
26 Tactful and distinct in pronouncement (8)
27 Pot-head, one preparing apricots? (6)

### Down

1 Struggle, insanely bored: it's what you have to wear (8)
2 Bow stored in cedar chest (3)
3 Model wearing elaborate headgear: wow! (5,4)
5 He'd gab and grumble affectedly – tried to subtly impress (6-7)
6 More paintings etc by O'Keeffe finally put up (5)
7 Sinking in Tigris, green, flailing (11)
8 Go back, not initially finding exit (6)
10 Before perhaps, ladies in trouble (13)
13 Like forward planning a mass exodus (11)
16 Seriously, I'm approaching Robin's home (2,7)
17 Goes to join with senior teachers' backing (5,3)
19 In the wrong order, finally arrive in hilly area (6)
21 Conclude fashionable arbiter must be sent up (5)
25 Possess fancy item of clothing that's no good (3)

Name

Address

Post code

£15 book tokens for the first five correct solutions opened.
Solutions postmarked not later than Saturday night to:
The Observer PO Box 17566, Birmingham, B33 3EZ or fax 0121 742 1313.
No enclosures please other than name and address. Results on Sunday week.

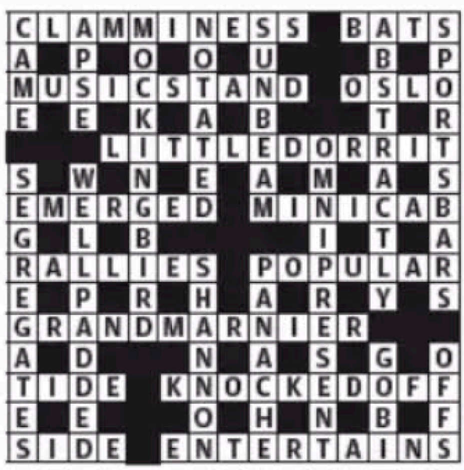
## Sudoku classic

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2 | 5 | | 3 | | | |
| 3 | 4 | | 7 | | | | | 2 |
| | | | | | | 4 | 7 | |
| | 5 | 4 | 6 | | | | | 1 |
| | | | | 3 | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | 1 | 2 | 8 | |
| | 9 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | 7 | | 6 | 4 |
| | | | 1 | | 6 | 8 | | |

Fill in the blank cells using the numbers 1 to 9.

Each number must appear just once in every row, column and 3x3 box.

**SOLUTION No. 4,050**



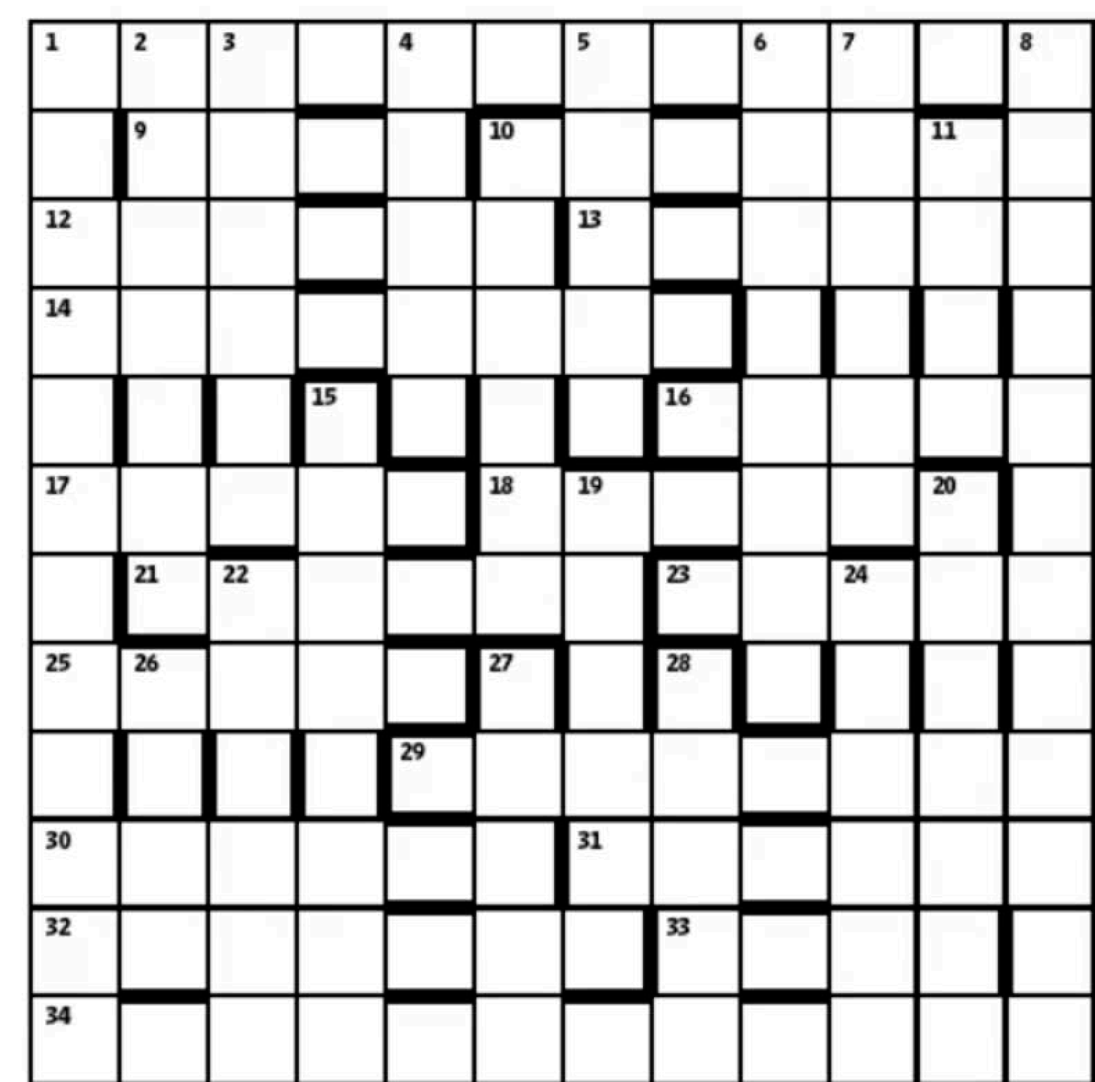

**Everyman No. 4,049 winners**
John Kitchen, Hertfordshire
Maureen Manuel, Norfolk
PA Magee, Kidderminster, Worcestershire
David Pugh, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
Cedric Spiller, Worthing, Sussex

**SUDOKU SOLUTIONS**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 8 |
| 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 2 |
| 1 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 3 |
| 8 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 1 |
| 2 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 6 |
| 7 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 5 |
| 6 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| 5 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 4 |
| 4 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 9 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 2 |
| 4 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 5 |
| 1 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 6 |
| 9 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 1 |
| 5 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 4 |
| 2 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 8 |
| 8 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 3 |
| 3 | 9 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 7 |
| 6 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 9 |

# Azed No. 2,712 Plain



Name

Address

Post code

## Across

1 Abrasive tool limits unsightly smirch in sailor's hobby (12)
9 Clan group turned up behind Scots manor? (4)
10 Stuff I had for meal following part of weekend in short (7)
12 Old-style lentils etc in *soupes à l'étrangère*? (6)
13 Wheel man in fathoms lapses circling island (6)
14 Popular gathering cooked cecils in middle of meal (8)
16 Communication I kept in crock returned? (5)
17 Messenger from Scotland formerly that is trailing old errand boy (5)
18 Clubs provided with money for repetition of parts (6)
21 Desires getting female in a state briefly (6)
23 What's enfolding shrimati, see? I'm this —possibly (5)
25 Diver splashing about? (5)
29 Court damns miscreant, one riding to hounds (8)
30 Little 'un pinches women, showing pluck (6)
31 Large insects getting about among crawling lice (6)
32 Head surrounded by escort going round old Jewish ascetics (7)
33 The old mount special area, heart turning over (4)
34 Fresh drafts, matter Sterne neglected (12)

## Down

1 Spruce twinkling brightness in the States revealing massed galaxies (12)
2 Sweet treat on marble? Skater may perform this (7)
3 Essayist's harsh attack about capital (6)
4 Old animal's bolthole, opening for escape in frenzy (5)
5 Muslim of glorious memory has endless bubbliness (5)
6 Irani bowling introduces lifted trajectory – it's intended to disconcert opponent (8)
7 Shrines for holy ones, erected like Gaudí's masterpiece mostly? (6)
8 Blushing about love's silly, showing firm determination (12)
10 Source of oil is shortly found in pork lard (6)
11 Small monkey, one dashed off by Venetian master (4)
15 Beauty husband cut, a composite – great mishap (8)
19 Short blades and so on alternating with call for help (6)
20 RC decoration encountered around part of Yorkshire? (7)
22 Occupant of part of Asia Minor close to island in it (6)
24 Continue in the same location on the briny (6)
26 Clumsy old so-and-so given rise, certainly not stern (4)
27 Second-rate tea, black – gosh! – with running water added (5)
28 Belief in supposed force? Nothing to uncover – ask away (5)

**The Chambers Dictionary (2016) is recommended.**

## Azed No. 2,709 solution & notes

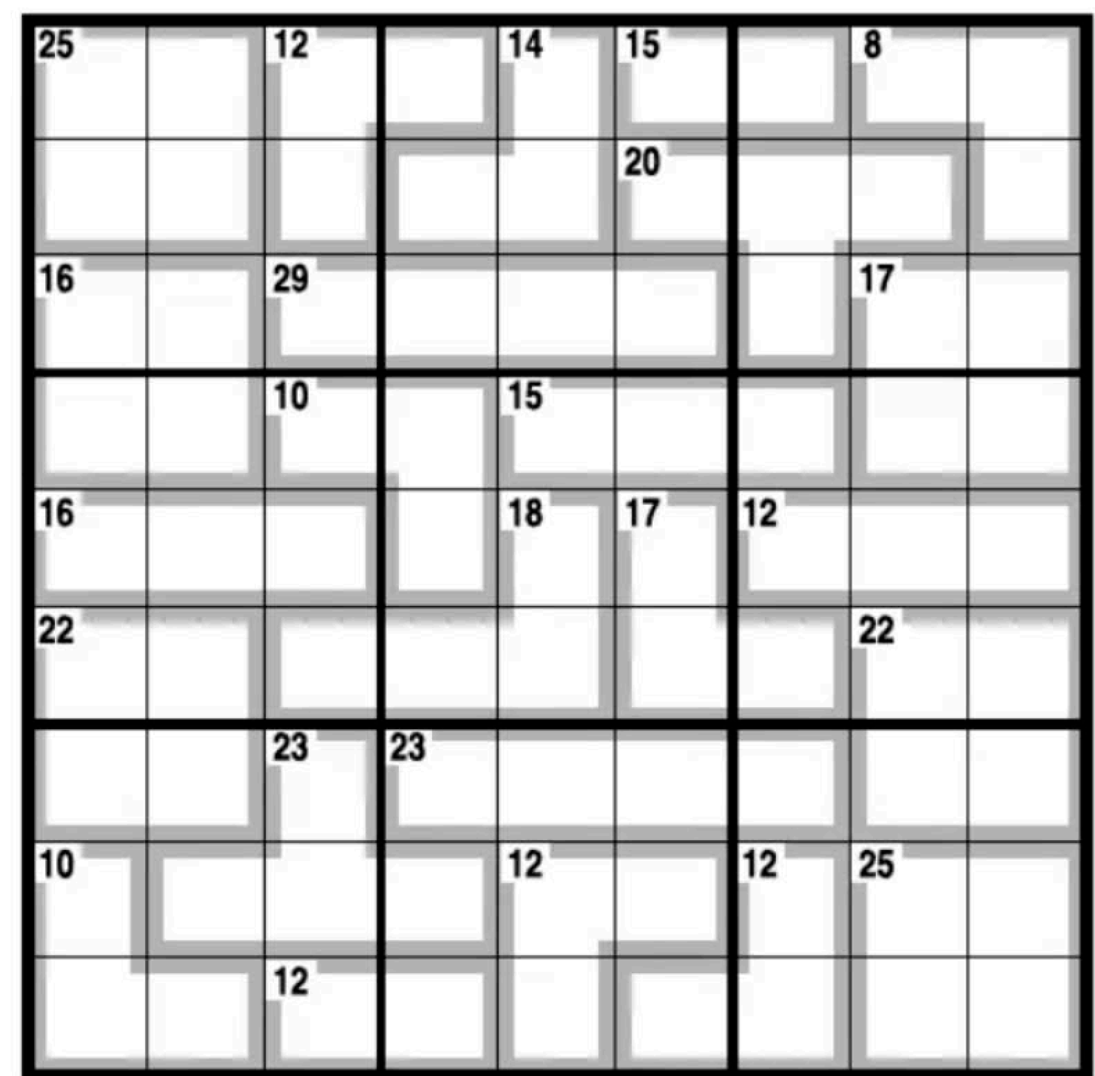
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | P | H | T | H | A | W | O | T | C | H | A |
| C | A | S | U | A | R | I | N | A | H | U | V |
| C | R | O | N | E | T | G | E | L | A | T | I |
| U | T | A | E | M | S | A | G | A | M | U | T |
| S | I | L | I | C | O | N | E | N | F | E | A |
| T | T | E | N | O | N | P | S | T | R | U | M |
| R | U | M | B | O | G | O | S | C | A | R | I |
| E | R | B | O | P | A | N | C | H | I | O | N |
| M | A | R | O | N | R | T | A | A | N | Z | O |
| E | L | O | H | I | M | O | V | I | B | O | S |
| N | A | T | A | D | E | N | O | S | I | N | E |
| T | S | H | I | R | T | S | W | E | D | E | S |

**Across** 1, hidden; 11, casua(l) + anag.; 12, ref. trot²; 15, alternate letters; 18, (of)ten on; 27, r O (level) in man.
**Down** 1, anag. + men in act; 2, p + it in Art(h)ur; alternative spellings of pianist's forename; 5, T(-square) son in anag.; 10, a mino in anag.; 14, Br. in anag.; 17, ozon(e) in Eure; 28, a(t) las(t).

**Azed No. 2,709 winners**
Winston Tuggawah, Nottinghamshire
John Pugh, Cardiff
HC Gordon, Bristol

**Rules and requests**
Send your entry to *Azed No. 2,712, The Observer, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU*. Entries must be postmarked no later than the Saturday following publication of the puzzle and must reach us within 10 days of publication of the puzzle (ie by Wednesday week following publication). Readers' solutions will be selected at random from all those received by the Observer by that date until three correct solutions have been found. A £25 book token will be awarded for each of the three correct solutions selected. The book token will be sent by post.
For further information visit theguardian.com/crosswords/2014/dec/30/azed-faq

# Killer by Godefridus



Normal Sudoku rules apply, except the numbers in the cells contained within grey lines add up to the figures in the corner. No number can be repeated within each shape formed by the grey lines.

**Cinema Connect answers**
*Under the Skin* (2013), *Ghost World* (2001) and *Asteroid City* (2023) all star Scarlett Johansson.

# Chess by Jonathan Speelman

**Diagram 1**
Horribly out of form, Ding played 29... Rb2??. Why was this a gross blunder? (See the end.)

The 12th annual Norway chess tournament concluded in Stavanger on Friday and we will look at the final outcome next week. As noted last time, it began slowly with two entire rounds of draws, but since then it has been frenetic, starting with just a single draw in the next three rounds!

Of all the different formats of chess, matchplay is the most intense, since every game against your rival is a "six-pointer" in football terms. And small double-round all-play-alls are next on the list, since the leaderboard can often be turned on its head in a single round. Once they started bashing each other, Hikaru Nakamura nosed ahead, beating Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa as White and Ding Liren as Black in rounds five and six.

The world champion has been horribly out of form and lost all four games from rounds 3 to 6. In the last of these, he allowed Magnus Carlsen to deliver mate in two with a queen sacrifice – really just an execution – which a good club player would expect to have have spotted a mile off (see diagram 1). Ding did at least draw with Pragg in round seven, but then lost the Armageddon. Both Carlsen and Nakamura have said that Ding looks miserable at the board and we can only hope that he recovers by the time he needs to defend his title against Dommaraju Gukesh.

Carlsen for his part had gone the last three rounds of Stavanger 2022, the whole of the previous tournament (eight draws and one loss) and the first two rounds this year without a win: 14 in total. In round three this became 15 when he was defeated in a fine game by Pragg.

Having had his tail tweaked, Carlsen pulled himself together and beat Fabiano Caruana as Black in a delicate endgame (see below), before further wins against Alireza Firouzja and Ding, which put him marginally ahead of Nakamura (under 3/0 for win/loss and 1.5/1 for win/loss at Armageddon) before they faced off on Monday with the American as White. They drew fairly early on and a fierce Armageddon game followed, which Nakamura finally won (below), narrowing the gap to half a point.

On Tuesday all three games were drawn. Carlsen won his Armageddon game against Pragg but Nakamura lost to Firouzja, so Carlsen's lead increased to a point before the rest day.

**Diagram 2**
*Despite the limited material, Black has serious pressure and Caruana decided to bail out.*
**43 Kh2!? Rxd2 44 Qxg3 Rxf2 45 Qxf2 Qe5+ 46 Kg1 Qxe4** *Of course Black has an extra pawn, but with so many checks you'd hope to draw against most people.*
**47 Qa7 h5 48 Qe7 Qe1+ 49 Kh2 Qe5+ 50 Kg1 Kh7 51 Qe8 h4 52 Qe7 Qd4+ 53 Kh1 Qa1+ 54 Kh2 Qf6 55 Qe8 Kh6 56 Kg1 e5 57 Qa4 Qf4 58 Qc6+ Kg5 59 Qc7 Qd4+ 60 Kf1 Kf4!** *Jettisoning the g-pawn to activate the king.*
**61 Qxg7 Ke3 62 Kg1** *If 62 Qh6+ Qf4+ 63 Qxf4+ Kxf4 64 Kf2 Black wins by "stalemating" the white king to force g4 hxg3 en passant (ie Ke1 v Ke3 pawn e2 with White to move).*
**62 ... e4 63 Qh6+ Ke2+ 64 Kh1 e3 65 Qa6+ Kf2**

**Diagram 3**
**66 Kh2?** *Apparently 66 Qa2+ e2 67 Qf7+! Ke1 68 Qf5! would still hold but this was absolutely unobvious.*
**66 ... e2** *Caruana resigned because if 67 Qa2 Qd6+ 68 Kh1 Qd1+ 69 Kh2 Qg1 is mate.*

**Diagram 4**
*In their Armageddon game (which of course Nakamura had to win) Carlsen tried*
**36 ... d2 36 Qb4?** *36 Kf1 "should" win.*
**36 ... Rd4!** *Carlsen played this resource instantly. Nakamura now retained winning chances by going into an ending with three pawns for the knight.*
**37 Qxd2 Rxd2 38 Rxd2 Ne6 39 b4**
*If 39 Re2 Kg8 Black plays Kf7 next and can then move the rook.*
**39 ... Kg8 40 b5 Ra8 41 Ra2 Kf7 42 Kf2 Ke7 43 b6 Nc5 44 Ke3 Kd6 45 Kf4 g6 46 h4 Kd5 47 Kg4 Kc6 48 h5 Rg8 49 Rc2 Kb5 50 hxg6 Rxg6+ 51 Kh5**
*At this exact moment the position is drawn but in playing 51... Rg5+ Carlsen lost on time.*

In diagram 1 after
**29 ... Rb2??** *29 ... h6 was still a battle: indeed, computer engines give it as equal.*
**30 Qxh7+!** *Ding resigned since 30 ... Kxh7 31 Rh4 is checkmate.*



**1** Magnus Carlsen v Ding Liren (to play)



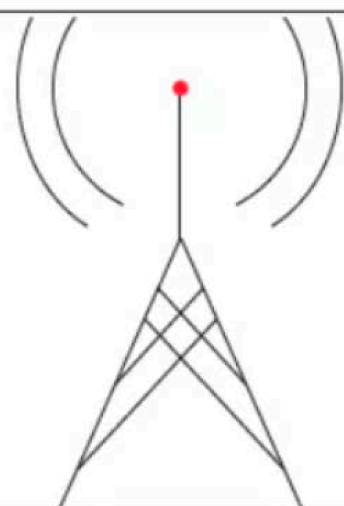
**2** Fabiano Caruana (to play) v Magnus Carlsen



**3** Fabiano Caruana (to play) v Magnus Carlsen



**4** Hikaru Nakamura v Magnus Carlsen (to play)



# Television

By Hollie Richardson

Films by Jonathan Romney

## The week's highlights

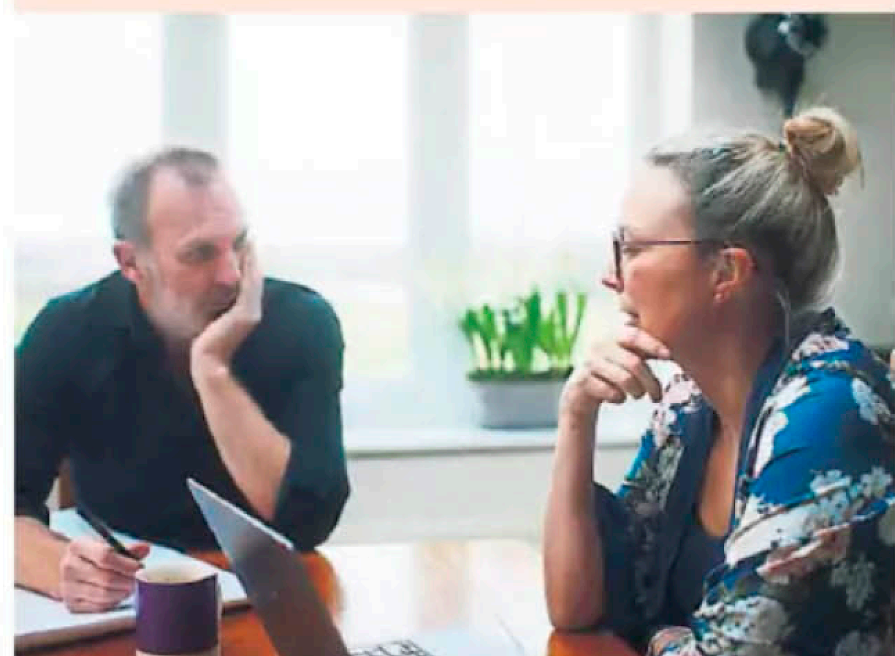
## Today

**Pick of the Day**

### Maternity: Broken Trust

*ITV1, 10.15pm*

A furious, harrowing but sensitive documentary about new parents who have gone through the unimaginable – and are fighting for hospitals to take responsibility. It starts with Sarah and Jack, whose daughter Harriet was stillborn at the hospital they both worked at. After they were told it was due to an infection, an inquest later found the death was preventable. From waiting years to receive hospital records to being told they don't remember things correctly, the stories are shocking.



### On Thin Ice: Putin v Greenpeace

*BBC Two, 9pm & 9.30pm*

In 2013, a group of Greenpeace activists took action against Russia's Arctic oil drilling by attempting to attach a pod to a rig. It was stopped when the Russian authorities tracked, followed and arrested them. In this wild six-parter, those involved tell the terrifying story of events that led to months of imprisonment – an oh-so-clear message from Putin.

### The Piano: The Final

*Channel 4, 9pm*

It's time for the final concert but surely nothing can match the emotional punch of last year's winner Lucy? The four giving it a good shot are Michael, singing in his own, made-up language, Ukrainian Daria, introverted Teddy, 10-year-old Sum and a surprise wildcard contestant. Claudia Winkleman hosts. **HR**

**Film**

### Total Recall

*(Paul Verhoeven, 1990)*

*ITV4, 9pm*

In his last two films *Elle* and *Benedetta*, Dutch showman Paul Verhoeven returned to his roots as a European art-house provocateur, but in the 80s and 90s, his Hollywood career gave him the most sulphurous reputation in mainstream cinema. This is one of his most spectacular and straightforwardly entertaining films, with Arnold Schwarzenegger as a mild-mannered working joe (yeah, right) who finds himself thrust into a world of interplanetary espionage. The script takes wild liberties with Philip K Dick's source story but the Dick spirit endures, and the film is a bracing reminder of a period when a mega-budget star vehicle could yield something this hallucinatory. Sharon Stone is here too, laying it on with a trowel. **JR**

## Monday

**Pick of the Day**

### Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace

*ITV1, 9pm*

Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell return with their heartstring-tugging family DNA series. First to go through the life-changing experience: Thomas, who was left in a railway station waiting room in Reading in 1965. Remarkably, they find a relative who was also abandoned – on the steps of a Dublin church. There are plenty of questions when they meet for the first time and it soon leads to even more life-changing discoveries for them both.



### Scam Interceptors

*BBC One, 10.45am*

The Bafta-winning series that catches scammers and gives seriously useful advice returns. Host (and former police officer) Rav Wilding and YouTuber (and software engineer) Jim Browning join forces with ethical hackers to try to stop a woman before she transfers thousands of pounds of her savings to scammers.

### Lost Boys & Fairies

*BBC One, 9pm*

Daf James's wonderful drama about a gay couple adopting in Wales continues with Andy (Fra Fee) and Gabe (Sion Daniel Young) slowly getting to know Jake before the big day of bringing him home for good. Tough conversations, laugh-out-loud moments and eye-opening realisations are ahead, along with Gabe's fabulous makeup and showtunes. **HR**

**Film**

### Went the Day Well?

*(Alberto Cavalcanti, 1942)*

*Film4, 11am*

It makes perfect sense – if you want a quintessential film about Englishness, hire Brazilian director, polymath and sometime set designer Alberto Cavalcanti. Based on a Graham Greene story, this wartime classic displays the inspired perversity Ealing Studios sometimes shared with Powell and Pressburger (see their *A Canterbury Tale*). In this case, what better way to raise British morale than a story about Germans invading an English village? The result is an unsettling counterpoint of bucolic cosiness and blunt violence, mixing propaganda with a distinct streak of existential paranoia. Making a mark among a stalwart cast (Leslie Banks, Mervyn Johns et al) is up-and-comer Thora Hird. **JR**

## Tuesday

**Pick of the Day**

### The Fall: Skydive Murder Plot

*Channel 4, 9pm*

A stranger-than-fiction true crime retold through dramatisations, recordings and the people who were there – including the victim. In 2015, Victoria Cilliers plummeted to the ground during a skydive after her parachute failed – and astonishingly survived. But this was no accident. Detectives spent two years digging into the murky life of Victoria's husband (affairs, debts, sex clubs) and found that he is the person who tried to murder his wife in the sky.



### The Great British Sewing Bee

*BBC One, 9pm*

Reduce, reuse, recycle! That's the theme for this week's challenges set by host Kiell Smith-Bynoe – who is settling into his new role nicely. One sewer is already wearing a tablecloth as a shirt so these should be easy enough: a scrap-fabric quilted bag, a solid-colour outfit made from old clothes and a wedding dress.

### Queenie

*Channel 4, 10pm & 10.35pm*

Candice Carty-Williams's adaptation continues and Queenie (Dionne Brown) has decided to make the most of her "break" from Tom (Jon Pointing) and find herself a situationship. But why isn't it the liberating experience she wanted? Then, in the second episode of a double bill, it's Christmas and her mum visits – triggering a whole load of trauma. **HR**

**Film**

### The Others

*(Alejandro Amenábar, 2001)*

*BBC Three, 9pm*

Wintry chills in an old-school vein from Chilean-born Spanish director Alejandro Amenábar, who at one time looked like becoming the Iberian answer to M Night Shyamalan. His English-language debut, a haunted house tale, is arguably his best film, because it's his simplest – devious final twist notwithstanding. Set in Jersey after the second world war, it stars Nicole Kidman on subtly nervy form as a woman whose two photosensitive children must stay in the dark. But mysterious visitors are nearby… Ingenuity and the odd well-timed thump, not to mention an improbable supporting role for the late Eric Sykes; if you like your horror mist-steeped, in an MR James mode, you'll enjoy. **JR**

## Wednesday

**Pick of the Day**

### Inside No 9

*BBC Two, 10pm*

So how will Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith end their deliciously dark cult hit anthology series after nine brilliant seasons? They're keeping details about the last ever episode tightly under wraps (making it all the more intriguing), but – after a series that has boasted top guest stars such as Natalie Dormer, Vinette Robinson, Siobhan Finneran and Mark Bonnar – it is confirmed that they are the only two stars in it. A fitting ending that will no doubt be ace.



### The Misadventures of Romesh Ranganathan

*BBC Two, 9pm*

To Madagascar this week, one of the world's biggest islands – but the only knowledge Ranganathan has of it comes from the kids' animated film. To find out more, he befriends local taxi drivers, tries zebu penis soup, visits the "mad queen" palace and discovers the beautiful nature under threat.

### Painting Birds With Jim and Nancy Moir

*Sky Arts, 9pm*

For the finale of their wholesome hobbyist series, Jim and Nancy head to Kilcloon in Ireland in search of little terns – and are lucky enough to see fluffy chicks on the beach. Later, they meet musician Imelda May and fellow birdwatching enthusiast David Lindo for a chat. **HR**

**Film**

### The Conversation

*(Francis Ford Coppola, 1974)*

*BBC Two, 11.30pm*

A movie about surveillance and paranoia, from an era when privacy was actually a thing. One of the outstanding American films of the 1970s, and arguably the crowning glory of that era's cycle of political thrillers, it stars Gene Hackman, at his most commandingly terse, as reclusive, obsessive surveillance specialist Harry Caul. Hired to eavesdrop on a couple in San Francisco, he finds ever more ambiguity hidden between the clicks and the crackles. A sonic variation on Antonioni's *Blow-Up*, this is one of the great films about technology and how we use it, or it uses us – mandatory watching if you're interested in the ways that screen narratives can catch our imaginations, to the point of madness. **JR**

# Thursday

## Pick of the Day
### The ITV Election Debate
*ITV1, 8.30pm*
As the general election in July gets closer, Ed Davey, John Swinney, Carla Denyer, Adrian Ramsey, Nigel Farage and Rhun ap Iorwerth have been invited to join Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer for ITV's second general election debate (senior representatives of each party – Liberal Democrats, SNP, Green, Reform UK and Plaid Cymru – will take part if their leader doesn't). Julie Etchingham will again lead the discussion and – with any luck – won't need to keep telling them off again.



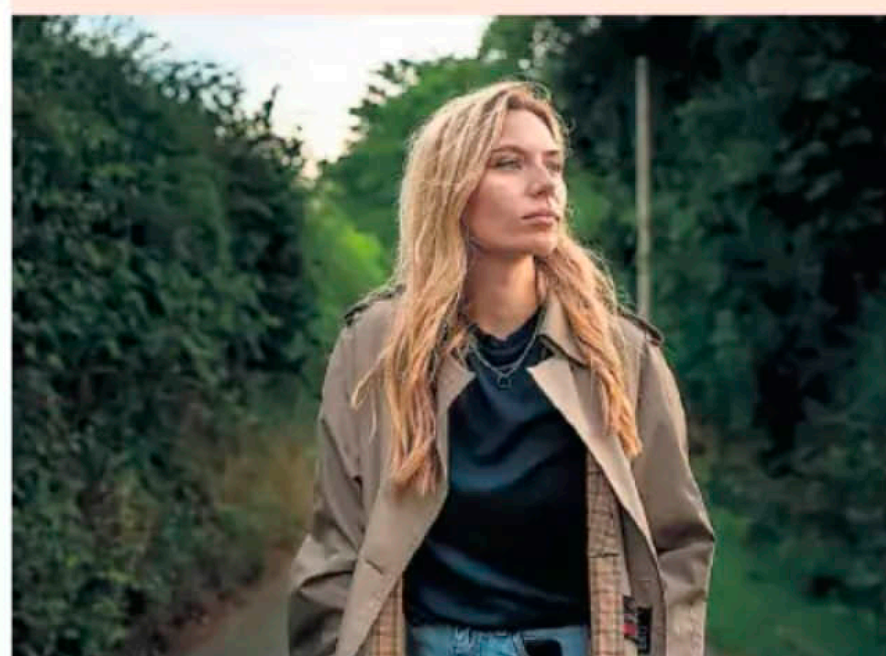
### The Truth v Alex Jones
*Sky Documentaries, 9pm*
Alex Jones is a conspiracy theorist who, in 2022, was ordered to pay almost $1.5bn for falsely claiming that the 2012 Sandy Hook elementary school shooting was a hoax. This shocking documentary was filmed over four years, following the courtroom drama of those defamation lawsuits brought by the victims' families.

### We Are Lady Parts
*Channel 4, 10pm & 10.35pm*
The second fantastic series of the female punk band comedy, sealed by a Malala Yousafzai cameo, ends with a rocking double bill. The group are finally recording an album in a swish studio, but while success is in sight each member is dealing with all sorts of personal issues. It's set for a weepy ending. **HR**

## Film
### The Royal Hotel
*(Kitty Green, 2023)*
*Sky Cinema Premiere, 10pm*
The revelation of Netflix series *Ozark*, Julia Garner clicked terrifically with writer-director Kitty Green in acclaimed #MeToo-themed drama *The Assistant*. Here they are reunited, as Green directs her critical scalpel towards entrenched traditions of machismo in her native Australia. Garner and Jessica Henwick play American backpackers who sign up for bartending in an outback mining town. Their boss (Hugo Weaving) is bad news enough, but then they meet the male clientele – including Dolly, played altogether unnervingly by Daniel Henshall. Green turns some of the conventions of Australian "outback peril" drama inside out, with Garner and Henwick a terrific team as naive hedonists who wise up under fire. **JR**

# Friday

## Pick of the Day
### Paranormal: The Village That Saw Aliens
*BBC Three, 9pm & 9.30pm*
The TikTok generation are increasingly obsessed about UFO sightings, according to curious Welsh journalist Sian Eleri, who investigates the local history of the phenomenon in this intriguing four-part documentary series. She starts with a double bill, seeking out the 14 men who claimed they saw a UFO when they were boys in 1977, and the hotelier who, weeks before that, said she had seen a spaceship and "two creatures".



### Hidden Treasures of the National Trust
*BBC Two, 9pm*
The final grand visits of the season are to Chirk Castle near Wrexham, where an 18th-century portrait of a servant reveals one of the house's big secrets. Then it's off to Oxburgh Hall in Norfolk, where another portrait causes intrigue – but it is hidden under the stairs. **HR**

### Jerrod Carmichael Reality Show
*Sky Comedy, 10pm & 10.35pm*
Carmichael deals with jealousy and the "rules" surrounding non-monogamy after starting an open relationship. Meanwhile, a visit from his devout churchgoing mother Cynthia is the cue for some eminently quotable conversation ("I really want to protect her and also low-key destroy her") in this twin-episode series closer. **Ali Catterall**

## Film
### Rebecca
*(Alfred Hitchcock, 1940)*
*Talking Pictures TV, 3.10pm*
"Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again…" *Rebecca* hits a note of hallucination right from the opening line, and Hitchcock's first American film certainly sustains an otherworldly eeriness. In this adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's novel, Joan Fontaine is the ingenue haunted by the shadow of her new husband's ex, with Laurence Olivier playing the brusque, brooding "Mr Rochester" card as Maxim de Winter. But the really immortal part is that of forbidding housekeeper Mrs Danvers (a slyly chilling Judith Anderson), a role later reworked with silky menace by Lesley Manville in Paul Thomas Anderson's *Phantom Thread*. One of the great Hollywood melodramas, and one of the most inexhaustibly analysable. **JR**

# Saturday

## Pick of the Day
### Rooney 2004: World at His Feet
*BBC One, 10.30pm*
The Euros kick off this week, so to get in the mood here's a documentary that tells the story of the 12 days of highs and lows that changed the then-18-year-old England striker Wayne Rooney's life during Euro 2004. While it marked the arrival of a big, young star on the pitch, could England have won had Rooney not injured himself against Portugal? Rooney himself and his then strike partner in the tournament, Michael Owen, recall every detail for us here.



### Trooping the Colour 2024: The King's Birthday Parade
*BBC One, 10:30am*
Clare Balding hosts live coverage of King Charles III's official birthday parade. The Irish Guards will troop their colour on Horse Guards Parade, and the celebrations will end with the RAF fly-past. Petroc Trelawny and Radzi Chinyanganya will be providing commentary and speaking to people.

### Later… With Jools Holland
*BBC Two, 9.55pm*
Richard Hawley, Remi Wolf, Nia Archives, Stephen Wilson Jr and Sahra Halgan – that's your musical lineup for this week. Producer, academic and former Steel Pulse member Mykaell Riley will also be speaking to Holland about a new British Library exhibition, Beyond the Bassline, which celebrates 500 years of Black British music. **HR**

## Film
### Heat
*(Michael Mann, 1995)*
*Sky Cinema 90s, 10.10pm*
Famous for getting Pacino and De Niro facing off over a coffee, *Heat* is one of the most intelligent of big-budget thrillers, and among cinema's most dazzling hymns to LA. Following the cat-and-mouse game between a policeman and his prey, this is one of the most thoroughly existential of Hollywood cop-v-robber movies. It's about urban space, the sound of crime (gunfire never sounded so much like musique concrète) and the characters' fraught private lives – cue great performances by Diane Venora and a young Natalie Portman. Mann has often projected himself as a super-intellectual auteur while making big empty B-movies – but here his masterly precision is united with heart, brain and philosophical melancholy. **JR**

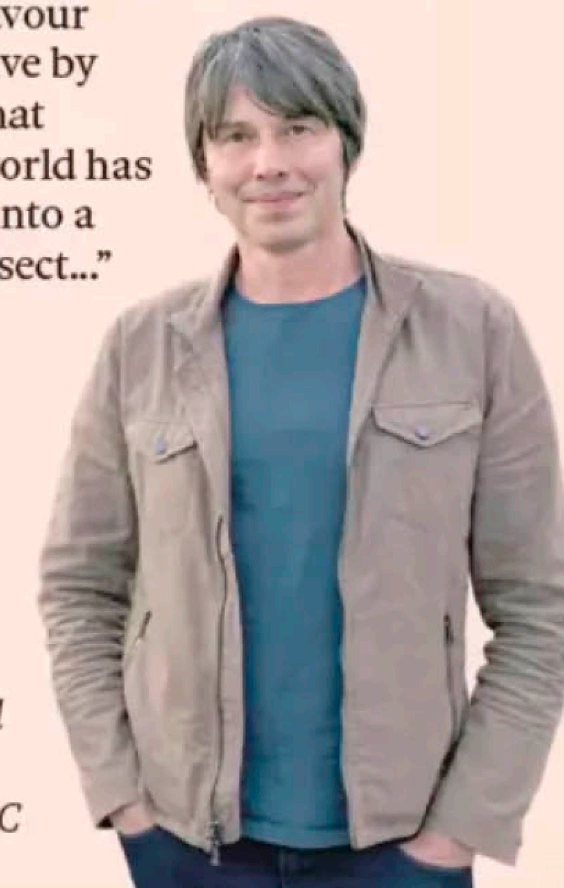
# Radio *By Stephanie Billen*

## Picks of the Week
Prof Brian Cox proves a stimulating guest on ***Private Passions*** *(Sunday, Radio 3, 12noon)*, choosing music that conveys a sense of wonder and asks: "How can we as humans justify our existence when faced with the unlimited power of nature?" Among his choices is Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, used for *2001: A Space Odyssey*, plus epic pieces by Mahler, Charles Ives and Keith Jarrett. An advocate for the arts ("You won't find meaning through the eyepiece of a telescope"), he is an even greater champion of the human race, stressing its obligation not just to survive but to get out into the galaxy: "If we do not dance up to the cosmos, nobody in the cosmos is dancing."

In ***Jessica Fostekew: Sturdy Girl Club*** *(Wednesday, Radio 4, 6.30pm)*, the comedian celebrates the strength of her own body, achieved through fitness regime CrossFit, a mix of weightlifting, gymnastics and athleticism that she calls "exercise tapas". In her humorous but thoughtful four-part series, she explores its addictiveness but also the troubling "lads, lads, lads toxicity" of its origin story.

***Open Country*** *(Thursday, Radio 4, 3pm)* finds artist Maggi Hambling explaining to Anneka Rice how the sea's grandeur makes her feel "tiny and unimportant". She laments the fact that: "There is no awe any more; it's just selfies everywhere." The two are friends with Rice part of a painting group run by the artist. Their intimacy elicits further confidences as Hambling discusses the inspiring Suffolk landscape and the controversy surrounding some of her work.

Dan Rebellato's ***Restless Dreams*** *(Saturday, Radio 4, 3.15pm)* riffs on the stories of Franz Kafka, exploring how they only survived because literary executor Max Brod disobeyed an instruction to burn his papers. Set on the 1939 train taking Brod (Anton Lesser) and his suitcase of manuscripts away from the Nazis, the drama turns dreamlike after the case falls on his head. With carriages full of circus performers, animals and philosophers, the passengers face a bumpy ride culminating in both Brod and Kafka considering their legacies. Meanwhile Brod's wife, Elsa, puts all human endeavour into perspective by speculating that "maybe the world has transformed into a monstrous insect…"



*Prof Brian Cox: universal man. Kelly Wundsam/BBC*

# Monday 10

**Lost Boys & Fairies, BBC One, 9pm**
*Gabriel (Sion Daniel Young) and Andy's adoption journey continues*

## BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.30** Morning Live (T) **10.45** Scam Interceptors (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.35** Regional News (T) **1.45** News (T) **2.0** Rip Off Britain (T) (R) **2.30** Animal Park (T) (R) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **4.30** The Finish Line (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T) Linda is rocked when Bernie asks to have Keanu's wake.

8.0 **Panorama** (T) In-depth current affairs report.
8.30 **The Bidding Room** (T) (R) Items brought in by the public include a 1960s swivel chair.
9.0 **Lost Boys & Fairies** (T) (2/3) With preparations for the adoption under way, a shocking event changes the family's lives for ever.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **Have I Got a Bit More News for You** (T) (R)
11.25 **High: Surviving a Dubai Drugs Bust** (T) (R) (4 & 5/5) Karl tries to make a life for himself in prison, gigging for inmates in the canteen.
12.25 **Weather for the Week Ahead** (T) **12.30** News (T)

## BBC Two

6.45 **Bargain Hunt** (T) (R) **7.30** Clive Myrie's Caribbean Adventure (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Mammals (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Mastermind (T) (R) **2.15** Five Bedrooms (T) (R) (3 & 4/8) Two Wills & Four Gummies **3.45** The Farmers' Country Showdown (T) (R) **4.15** Big Cats About the House (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Clive Myrie's Caribbean Adventure (T) **7.0** Earth's Great Rivers: Amazon (T) (R)

8.0 **Springwatch** (T) Megan McCubbin and Iolo Williams celebrate the wildlife in Britain's cities.
9.0 **On Thin Ice: Putin v Greenpeace** (T) (3 & 4/6) The Arctic Sunrise is captured and the activists are sent to a Murmansk prison. A global campaign is launched from London.

10.0 **The Young Ones** Interesting (T) (R) (5/6) Party time…
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.05 **Hidden Treasures of the National Trust** (T) (R) (5/6) Disraeli's gates are given a golden upgrade.
12.05 **Best of Glastonbury 2019** (T) (R) **2.10** Sign Zone: Countryfile (T) (R) **3.05** Great British Railway Journeys (T) (R)

## ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News (T) Weather **1.55** Local News (T) Weather **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) **3.0** Lingo (T) (R) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) **6.0** Local News (T) Weather **6.30** News (T) Weather **7.30** Emmerdale (T) Belle feigns illness to hide her pregnancy from Tom and feels apprehensive about her options, and there is a charged moment between Gabby and Vinny.

8.0 **Coronation Street** (T) A sinister delivery for Toyah prompts Nick to issue Leanne with an ultimatum.
9.0 **Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace** (T) New series. Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell help foundlings find relatives, including one left in a waiting room in 1965.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 **Unbelievable Moments Caught on Camera** (T) (R)
11.45 **Maternity: Broken Trust** (T) (R)
12.55 **Shop on TV** **3.0** My Mum, Your Dad (T) (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Gino's Italy: Like Mamma Used to Make/Secrets of the South (T) (R)

## Channel 4

6.30 **Cheers** (T) (R) Double bill. **7.25** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) Four episodes. **9.10** Frasier (T) (R) **9.40** F1: Canadian Grand Prix Highlights (T) (R) The ninth round of the season, held at the Circuit Gilles-Villeneuve in Montreal. **11.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **12.05** News (T) **12.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **1.10** Car SOS (T) (R) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** Sun, Sea and Selling Houses (T) **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) (R) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News

8.0 **Bake Off: The Professionals** (T) New series. A new batch of professional pastry chefs compete for the title.
9.0 **24 Hours in A&E** (T) New series. A 38-year-old is rushed in after coming off his motorbike, a skydiver has landed badly and a six-year-old has swallowed an unknown object.

10.0 **Football Cops** (T)
11.05 **Italia 90: When Football Changed Forever** (T) (R) (1-3/3)
1.55 **24 Hours to Hell and Back** (T) (R) **2.40** FILM Shiva Baby (Emily Seligman, 2020) (T) Comedy. **4.0** Iris Prize Shorts (T) **4.20** Grand Designs Australia (T) (R) **5.15** Escape to the Chateau (T) (R) **5.20** Frasier (T) (R)

## Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) The broadcaster and guests discuss the issues of the day, with co-host Storm Huntley joining him for phone-ins. **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) Debate continues. **12.45** Friends (T) (R) Double bill. **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.20** FILM Seduced By Murder (Christie Will Wolf, 2022) (T) (R) **3.50** Entertainment News (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Police Interceptors (T) (R) **7.0** Traffic Cops (T) (R)

8.0 **Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders** (T) A driver refuses to stop for PC Brian Camsell, ditches his car and tries to run for it.
9.0 **Inside the Force** (T) Officers deal with alcohol-related incidents in Middlesbrough, attending a serious assault outside a club.

10.0 **The Hospital: Life on the Line** (T) A 60-year-old woman has a five-hour operation to fix a faulty heart valve.
11.05 **Critical Condition** (T) (R)
12.05 **Ultimate Police Interceptors** (T) (R) **1.0** Live Casino (T) **3.0** Secret Scotland (T) (R) (8/10) Isles of Mull & Staffa **3.50** Britain By Bike (T) (R) **4.40** Wildlife SOS (T) (R)

## BBC Four

7.0 **Great British Railway Journeys** (T) (R) (5/15) Armed with his Bradshaw's guide, Michael Portillo reaches Birmingham and discovers how a radical reformer would make his mark on the "city of a thousand trades". **7.30** Villages By the Sea (T) (R) The story of Clovelly, Devon.

8.0 **Michael Palin and the Ladies Who Loved Matisse** (T) (R) Documentary about American sisters Claribel and Etta Cone, who amassed a multimillion-dollar art collection.
9.0 **Easter Island Origins** (T) A look at new evidence that is rewriting the story of the remote Pacific isle.

10.0 **The Sky at Night** (T)
10.30 **Queen Victoria's Letters: A Monarch Unveiled** (T) (1/2)
11.30 **Imagine… Gilbert and George — No Surrender** (R)
12.20 **Great British Railway Journeys** (T) (R) **12.50** Villages By the Sea (T) (R) **1.20** Easter Island Origins (T) (R) **2.20** Michael Palin and the Ladies Who Loved Matisse (T) (R)

## Other channels

### BBC Three

**7.0pm** The Fast and the Farmer-ish **7.30** Shark Tank **8.10** Shark Tank **8.50** The Catch Up **8.55** Ryan Tricks on the Streets **9.0** Roman Kemp: The Fight for Young Lives **10.0** Bad Education: Reunion Special **10.45** Dubai Hustle **11.15** Dubai Hustle **11.45** I Kissed a Boy **12.35** Confessions of a Teenage Fraudster **1.20** Bad Education: Reunion Special **2.05** Dubai Hustle **2.35** Dubai Hustle **3.05** My Mate's a Bad Date **3.30** Doctor Who: Unleashed

### Dave

**7.20am** Cop Car Workshop **8.05** The Force: Behind the Line **8.40** Things You Need to Know **9.20** Things You Need to Know **10.0** Top Gear **11.0** Top Gear **12.0** Storage Hunters UK. Four episodes. **2.0** Extreme Fishing **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** Hairy Bikers' Best of British **6.0** Rick Stein: From Venice to Istanbul **7.0** Would I Lie to You? **7.40** House of Games **8.20** House of Games **9.0** QI XL **10.0** QI **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Would I Lie to You? **1.20** Live at the Apollo **2.30** Meet the Richardsons **3.0** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **3.25** Whose…? USA

### E4

**6.0am** Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA **8.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **9.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** Young Sheldon **10.30** Young Sheldon **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory. Four episodes. **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Young Sheldon **4.30** Young Sheldon **5.0** The Big Bang Theory. Four episodes. **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Come Dine With Me **8.0** Dance Moms **9.0** Made in Chelsea **10.0** Gogglebox **11.05** First Dates **12.10** The Big Bang Theory **12.40** The Big Bang Theory **1.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **1.45** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.10** Modern Family **2.35** Dance Moms **3.25** Made in Chelsea **4.20** The Neighborhood **4.45** The Neighborhood **5.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine

### Film4

**11.0am** FILM Went the Day Well? (1942) **12.50** FILM Footsteps in the Fog (1955) **2.35** FILM Pool of London (1951) **4.20** FILM Von Ryan's Express (1965) **6.45** FILM Charlie's Angels (2019) **9.0** FILM Infinite (2021) **11.05** FILM The Grey (2011) **1.20** FILM Upgrade (2018)

### ITV2

**6.0am** Craig of the Creek **6.10** Teen Titans Go! **6.25** Teen Titans Go! **6.35** Jurassic World Camp Cretaceous **7.0** Mr Bean: The Animated Series **7.15** Mr Bean… **7.25** Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated **7.50** Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! **8.10** What's New Scooby-Doo? **8.35** Scooby-Doo and Guess Who? **9.0** World's Funniest Videos **9.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.0** Love Bites **11.0** Love Bites **12.0** Dress to Impress **1.0** Wheel of Fortune **2.0** Family Fortunes **3.0** Veronica Mars **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dress to Impress **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Deal Or No Deal **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Love Island **10.05** Olivia Attwood: The Price of Perfection **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **12.35** American Dad! **1.05** Bob's Burgers **1.35** Bob's Burgers **2.05** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.35** Unwind

### Sky Max

**6.0am** NCIS: LA **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **10.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** NCIS: LA **12.0** The Flash **1.0** SEAL Team **2.0** SEAL Team **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** SWAT **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **7.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Flintoff's Road to Nowhere **9.0** FILM Escape from New York (1981) **11.0** Rob & Romesh v Art **12.0** The Walking Dead **1.0** The Force: Manchester **2.0** A League of Their Own: Mexican Road Trip **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** SWAT **5.0** Highway Patrol **5.30** Highway Patrol

### Sky Arts

**6.0am** Rachmaninov: Rhapsody/The Two Pigeons **8.0** The Joy of Painting **8.30** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Tom Hanks **12.0** The Joy of Painting **12.30** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** Cold War and Cinema **3.0** Lenny Henry's Got the Blues **4.0** Discovering: Denzel Washington **5.0** The Joy of Painting **5.30** The Joy of Painting **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.30** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.0** André Rieu: 70 Years Young **10.50** Shakespeare: King Lear **2.0** FILM The Booksellers (2019) **4.0** Cheltenham Literature Festival **5.0** Auction **5.30** Auction: Jackie Kennedy Special

### Sky Atlantic

**6.0am** Fish Town **7.0** Fish Town **7.55** True Blood **9.0** True Blood **10.05** Billions **11.10** Billions **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** Sopranos **2.25** Sopranos **3.30** True Blood **4.35** True Blood **5.40** Billions **6.50** Billions **7.55** Game of Thrones **9.0** The Sympathizer **10.15** House of the Dragon: War Room **11.15** Succession **12.25** The King **1.25** The King **2.25** Game of Thrones **3.35** In Treatment **4.05** Fish Town **5.0** Fish Town

## On the radio

### Radio 3

**6.30am** Breakfast. Petroc Trelawny presents. **9.30** Essential Classics. With Georgia Mann. **1.0** Classical Live. Tom McKinney showcases performances from the UK and beyond, including highlights from the recent Hay-on-Wye festival. The afternoon begins with a recital by the accordionist Ryan Corbett of pieces by Scarlatti, Mendelssohn, Vladislav Zolotaryov and others, live at Wigmore Hall. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Orlando Gibbons (1/5) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Ian Skelly presents a live recital from Wigmore Hall. Brahms: Piano Quartets No 2 in A, Op 26, and No 1 in G minor, Op 25. Pavel Haas Quartet, Boris Giltburg (piano). **9.45** The Essay: Bohemians in T-Shirts - Actors. Michael Goldfarb explores the emergence of a postwar avant-garde in 1940s America. (R) (1/5) **10.0** Night Tracks. Hannah Peel presents. **11.30** 'Round Midnight. Soweto Kinch presents the best in jazz. **12.30** Through the Night

### Radio 4

**6.0am** Today **9.0** Start the Week (11/14) **9.45** Oliver Burkeman's Inconvenient Truth: The Nomadic Life (R) (2/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** Writing the Universe: In the Beginning. Robin Ince explores how authors and astronomers have presented the cosmos, beginning with a look at how writers have told the story of the origin of the universe and the real meaning of the phrase the big bang. (1) **11.45** Book of the Week: All That Glitters, by Orlando Whitfield. (1/5) **12.0** News **12.04** You and Yours **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Understand… The UK Election. Alex Forsyth and Adam Fleming unpick key elements of the general election. (1/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Fags, Mags and Bags: Grumpy-Pumpy Doo-Dah McGraw (2/6) **2.45** Gambits: The King, by Eley Williams. (R) (2/10) **3.0** A Good Read: Samantha Harvey & Darran Anderson (2/9) **3.30** Open Book **4.0** The South Asian Shift. Barnie Choudhury investigates the changing nature of South Asian voters in the UK. **4.30** The Kitchen Cabinet: Doncaster (5/7) **5.0** PM **6.0** News **6.30** I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue (5/6) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Briefing Room (R) **8.30** Inside Science (R) **9.0** Start the Week (R) **9.45** Assume Nothing: The Shankill Gold Rush - The Rush (R) (2/5) **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The Photographer, by Max Porter. (1/5) **11.0** Harland: Friday, by Lucy Catherine. (R) (4/5) **11.30** The Bottom Line: The Decisions That Made Me a Leader - How to Retire Before 30 (R) **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today

### Radio 4 Extra

**6.0am** Paul Temple and the Gilbert Case (1/8) **6.30** A Change in the Weather (1/5) **7.0** Minor Adjustment (2/6) **7.30** Steptoe and Son (8/8) **8.0** A Short Gentleman (1/4) **8.30** These Days (6/10) **8.45** Exile (1/10) **9.0** I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue (4/6) **9.30** Soundstage (1/5) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** The Moth Radio Hour (2/13) **10.55** Witness History **11.0** Paul Temple **11.30** A Change In… **12.0** Minor Adjustment (2/6) **12.30** Steptoe **1.0** A Short Gentleman (1/4) **1.30** These Days (6/10) **1.45** Exile (1/10) **2.0** Just a Minute (1/12) **2.30** The Nimmo Twins In... (5/6) **3.0** Thackeray **4.0** The Moth Radio Hour (2/13) **4.55** Witness History **5.0** Paul Temple **5.30** A Change In… **6.0** Minor Adjustment (2/6) **6.30** Steptoe **7.0** A Short Gentleman (1/4) **7.30** These Days (6/10) **7.45** Exile (1/10) **8.0** Just a Minute (1/12) **8.30** The Nimmo Twins In… (5/6) **9.0** Thackeray **10.0** I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue (4/6) **10.30** Goodness Gracious Me (3/4) **11.0** The News Quiz (1/7) **11.30** Dave Podmore's Cricket Night (3/4) **12.0** The Moth Radio Hour (2/13) **12.55** Witness History **1.0** Paul Temple **1.30** A Change In… **2.0** Minor Adjustment (2/6) **2.30** Steptoe **3.0** A Short Gentleman (1/4) **3.30** These Days (6/10) **3.45** Exile (1/10) **4.0** Just a Minute (1/12) **4.30** The Nimmo Twins In… (5/6) **5.0** Thackeray

# Tuesday 11



**Queenie, Channel 4, 10pm & 10.35pm**
*A 'situationship' and Christmas bring heartache for our heroine (Dionne Brown)*

## BBC One

**6.0** **Breakfast** (T) **9.30** Morning Live (T) **10.45** Scam Interceptors (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.35** Regional News (T) Weather **1.45** News (T) **2.0** Rip Off Britain (T) (R) **2.30** Animal Park (T) (R) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **4.30** The Finish Line (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **6.55** Party Election Broadcast (T) (R) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

**8.0** **Sort Your Life Out** (T) (R) Stacey Solmon and co help the Daniels family get rid of unnecessary clutter, including 905 items of baby clothing.

**9.0** **The Great British Sewing Bee** (T) In Reduce Reuse Recycle week, the sewers have to make quilted bags using fabric scraps.

**10.0** **News** (T)
**10.30** **Regional News** (T) Weather
**10.40** **Panorama** (T)
**11.10** **Tokyo Vice** Consequences & Endgame (T) (9 & 10/10) As Jake and Katagiri get closer to the truth, they put themselves and their loved ones in peril. In the season finale, they close in on Tozawa.
**1.05** **Weather** (T) **1.10** News (T)

## BBC Two

**6.45** **Bargain Hunt** (T) (R) **7.30** Caribbean Adventure (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Great British Sewing Bee (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Mastermind (T) (R) **2.15** Five Bedrooms (T) (R) **3.0** Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy (T) (R) **3.45** The Farmers' Country Showdown (T) (R) **4.15** Big Cats About the House (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Caribbean Adventure (T) **7.0** Earth's Great Rivers: Nile (T) (R)

**8.0** **Springwatch** (T) Iolo Williams visits the Dorset coast bird observatory.

**9.0** **On Thin Ice: Putin v Greenpeace** (T) (5 & 6/6) The team get letters to the press. The last instalment looks at how the campaign spread. Paul McCartney writes a letter asking for the release of the Arctic 30.

**10.0** **Meet the Richardsons** (T) (R) (4/6) Jon and Lucy go to Jonathan Ross's party.
**10.30** **Newsnight** (T) Weather
**11.05** FILM **Effie Gray** (Richard Laxton, 2014) (T) Fact-based period drama.
**12.45** **Sign Zone** Hidden Treasures of the National Trust (T) (R) **1.45** Touring Toolshed (T) (R) **2.15** The Outlaws (T) (R) **3.15** This Is BBC Two (T)

## ITV1

**6.0** **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News (T) Weather **1.55** Local News (T) Weather **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) The team head to Middlesbrough. **3.0** Lingo (T) (R) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) **6.0** Local News (T) Weather **6.30** News (T) Weather **7.30** Emmerdale (T) Tom interrogates a nervous Belle, and Ruby is riddled with guilt as Manpreet confides in her.

**8.0** **The Martin Lewis Money Show: Summer Special** (T) Financial advice for holidaymakers.

**9.0** **Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace** (T) "Euston Baby" Rachel and foundling Steve search for answers about their origins with the help of Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell.

**10.0** **News** (T) Weather
**10.30** **Local News** (T) Weather
**10.45** FILM **Skyfall** (Sam Mendes, 2012) (T) 007 action with Daniel Craig, Javier Bardem, Ralph Fiennes, Naomie Harris, Ben Whishaw.
**1.05** **Shop on TV** **3.0** My Mum, Your Dad (T) (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** James Martin's Spanish Adventure (T) (R)

## Channel 4

**6.30** **Cheers** (T) (R) Double bill. **7.20** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) Four episodes. **9.10** Frasier (T) (R) Four episodes. **11.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **12.05** News (T) **12.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **1.10** Car SOS (T) (R) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** Sun, Sea and Selling Houses (T) The Rodriguez sisters help a couple from Glasgow find their ideal holiday home. **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) (R) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

**8.0** **Bake Off: The Professionals** (T) The teams must turn their patisserie on its head.

**9.0** **The Fall: Skydive Murder Plot** (T) (1/3) The story of Victoria Cilliers's apparent skydiving accident in 2015 that sent her hurtling to the ground with no parachute, and the investigation that followed.

**10.0** **Queenie** (T) Double bill.
**11.05** **The Rest Is Politics Election Special** (T)
**12.10** **The Silence** (T) New Croatian and Ukrainian crime drama series. **1.10** Imposter: The Man Who Came Back from the Dead (T) (R) (4/4) **2.05** Taskmasterclass (T) (R) **3.0** We Are Lady Parts (T) (R) **4.0** Best British Shorts (T)

## Channel 5

**6.0** **Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.45** Friends (T) (R) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM The Teacher: Secrets That Kill (Jason James, 2021) (T) (R) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Police Interceptors (T) (R) **7.0** The Motorway Hotel (T) (1/4) A look at a family run business, yards from the M6 in Staffordshire, which caters to commuters, motorists, locals and road workers alike.

**8.0** **The Yorkshire Vet** (T) David Melleney travels to Cannon Hall Farm to care for an alpaca called Roxette.

**9.0** **Police Raid: Minute By Minute** (T) Officers back up gas company reps investigating energy theft by meter tampering, which causes fires and contributes to the drug trade.

**10.0** **My Mother, My Abuser** (T) (R) Three adults discuss being raised by abusive mothers.
**11.05** **Crimes That Shook Britain** (T) (R) (6/6) The murder of Rachel Nickell.
**12.05** **Ultimate Police Interceptors** (T) (R) **1.0** Live Casino (T) **3.0** Secret Scotland (T) (R) **3.50** The Railways That Built Britain (T) (R)

## BBC Four

**7.0** **Great British Railway Journeys** (T) (R) (6/15) Michael Portillo sets off on the first leg of a journey across Northern Ireland to Argyll and Bute, beginning by travelling from Newry to Portadown. **7.30** Villages By the Sea (T) (R) The history of Lindisfarne.

**8.0** **One Foot in the Grave** (T) (R) Victor Meldrew faces an uncertain future. The first episode of the sitcom from 1990.

**8.30** **Butterflies** (T) (R) Ria lies to Leonard about her age.

**9.0** **Rik Mayall: Lord of Misrule** (T) (R) Simon Callow narrates a celebration of the comic's life and work.

**10.0** **Storyville: Copa '71 – The Lost Lionesses** (T) A look at the 1971 watershed football tournament in Mexico City.
**11.20** **Fever Pitch: The Rise of the Premier League** (T) (R) (1 & 2/4)
**1.20** **Great British Railway Journeys** (T) (R) **1.50** Villages By the Sea (T) (R) **2.20** Rik Mayall… (T) (R)

# Other channels

### BBC Three

**7.0pm** The Fast and the Farmer-Ish **7.30** Shark Tank **8.10** Shark Tank **8.10** The Catch Up **8.50** Ryan Tricks on the Streets **9.0** FILM The Others (2001) **10.40** Fresh Cops **11.10** Fresh Cops **11.40** Confessions of a Teenage Fraudster **12.25** I Kissed a Boy **1.10** Charlotte in Sunderland **1.40** Charlotte in Sunderland **2.10** The Fast and the Farmer-Ish **2.40** Fresh Cops **3.10** Fresh Cops **3.40** My Mate's a Bad Date

### Dave

**7.20am** Cop Car Workshop **8.05** The Force: Behind the Line **8.40** James May's Things You Need to Know **9.20** Things You Need to Know **10.0** Top Gear **11.0** Top Gear **12.0** Storage Hunters UK. Four episodes. **2.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** Hairy Bikers' Best of British **6.0** Rick Stein: From Venice to Istanbul **7.0** Would I Lie to You? **7.40** House of Games **8.20** House of Games **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Would I Lie to You? **1.20** Live at the Apollo **2.30** Meet the Richardsons **3.0** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **3.25** Whose Line…? USA

### E4

**6.0am** Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA **8.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **9.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** Young Sheldon **10.30** Young Sheldon **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory. Four episodes. **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Young Sheldon **4.30** Young Sheldon **5.0** The Big Bang Theory. Four episodes. **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Come Dine With Me **8.0** Dance Moms **9.0** Gogglebox **10.0** Naked Attraction **11.05** First Dates **12.10** The Big Bang Theory **12.40** The Big Bang Theory **1.15** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **1.45** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.10** Modern Family **2.35** Modern Family **3.0** Dance Moms **3.50** Kitchen Nightmares USA **4.40** The Neighborhood **5.05** The Neighborhood

### Film4

**11.0am** FILM True Grit (1969) **1.50** FILM The Sons of Katie Elder (1965) **4.25** FILM Jason and the Argonauts (1963) **6.35** FILM The Eagle (2011) **9.0** FILM Monster Hunter (2020) **11.05** FILM The Big Man (1990) **1.25** FILM Kes (1969)

### ITV2

**6.35am** Bugs Bunny Builders **6.50** Mr Bean: The Animated Series **7.0** Mr Bean… **7.15** Mr Bean… **7.25** Scooby-Doo **9.0** World's Funniest Videos **9.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.0** Love Bites **11.0** Love Bites **12.0** Dress to Impress **1.0** Deal Or No Deal **2.0** Family Fortunes **3.0** Veronica Mars **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dress to Impress **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Deal Or No Deal **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Love Island **10.05** Extraordinary **10.40** Family Guy **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** American Dad! **12.05** American Dad! **12.35** Bob's Burgers **1.05** Bob's Burgers **1.35** G'wed **2.05** Totally Bonkers… **2.35** Unwind With ITV

### Sky Max

**6.0am** NCIS: LA **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **10.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** NCIS: LA **12.0** The Flash **1.0** MacGyver **2.0** MacGyver **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** SWAT **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **7.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Rob & Romesh v Golf **9.0** A League of Their Own: Mexican Road Trip **10.0** The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live **11.05** SWAT **12.05** The Walking Dead **1.0** Resident Alien **2.0** The Force: Manchester **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** SWAT **5.0** Highway Patrol **5.30** Highway Patrol

### Sky Arts

**6.0am** FILM The Conductor (2021) **8.0** Joy of Painting **8.30** Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Denzel Washington **12.0** Joy of Painting **12.30** Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** Inside Art Special: Coventry City of Culture **3.0** Wordsworth and Coleridge Road Trip With Frank Skinner and Denise Mina (1/3) **4.0** Discovering: Whoopi Goldberg **5.0** Joy of Painting **5.30** Joy of Painting **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.30** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Grand Ole Opry **8.0** The Art of the Garden **9.0** Leonardo: The Universal Man **10.15** FILM Gonzo: The Life and Work of Dr Hunter S Thompson (2008) **12.50** Summer Comedy Shorts **2.05** A Brush With Comedy **4.0** Cheltenham Literature Festival **5.0** Auction

### Sky Atlantic

**6.0am** Fish Town **7.0** Fish Town **7.55** True Blood **9.0** True Blood **10.05** Billions **11.10** Billions **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** The Sopranos **2.25** The Sopranos **3.30** True Blood **4.35** True Blood **5.40** Billions **6.45** Billions **7.50** Game of Thrones **9.0** The Tattooist of Auschwitz **10.10** The Making of the Tattooist of Auschwitz **10.45** House of the Dragon: War Room **11.45** House of the Dragon **12.55** Band of Brothers **2.10** Domina **3.20** Game of Thrones **4.35** In Treatment **5.05** Fish Town

# On the radio

### Radio 3

**6.30am** Breakfast. Petroc Trelawny presents. **9.30** Essential Classics. With Georgia Mann. **1.0** Classical Live. Today's programmes features French song from James Atkinson and Michael Pandya at the Hay-on-Wye festival, plus Schubert's Symphony No 5 in B♭, D 485, with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Juanjo Mena. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Gibbons (2/5) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Recorded at the Barbican. Martin Handley presents. Britten: Double Concerto for Violin and Viola. Interval. Vaughan Williams: A Sea Symphony (Symphony No 1). Silja Aalto (soprano), Morgan Pearse (baritone), Vilde Frang (violin), Lawrence Power (viola), BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Sakari Oramo. **9.45** The Essay: Bohemians in T-Shirts - Writers (R) (2/5) **10.0** Night Tracks. Hannah Peel presents. **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

### Radio 4

**6.0am** Today **9.0** Being Roman With Mary Beard: The Wolf of Via Vesuvio. The novelist Robert Harris joins Mary Beard to uncover the story of a Pompeii hustler. (6/6) **9.30** All in the Mind. With Claudia Hammond. (5/6) **10.0** Woman's Hour. Nuala McGovern presents. **11.0** Add to Playlist: Emma Rawicz and Gavin Higgins (R) (3/6) **11.45** Book of the Week: All That Glitters, by Orlando Whitfield. (2/5) **12.0** News **12.04** Call You and Yours. With Winifred Robinson. **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Understand… The UK Election (2/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Drama: Franz and Felice. Ed Harris's drama about Franz Kafka's relationship with Felice Bauer, and how their relationship influenced Kafka's stories. Ashley Margolis and Abigail Weinstock star. **3.0** The Gatekeepers: We Are As Gods. Jamie Bartlett traces how social media became the new information gatekeepers. (R) (1/8) **3.30** Thinking Allowed (4/6) **4.0** Poetry Please: Sean Hewitt (2/4) **4.30** When It Hits the Fan (7/12) **5.0** PM **6.0** News **6.30** Joe Lycett's Obsessions: Chelsea Norris and Jack Carroll (R) (3/4) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Public Philosopher. Prof Michael Sandel and a studio audience consider the ethics of AI. **8.40** In Touch **9.0** The Law Show (R) (3/4) **9.30** The Bottom Line (R) (1/8) **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The Photographer, by Max Porter. (2/5) **11.0** Uncanny USA (7/10) **11.30** The Bottom Line: The Decisions That Made Me a Leader **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today

### Radio 4 Extra

**6.0am** Paul Temple and the Gilbert Case (2/8) **6.30** A Change in the Weather (2/5) **7.0** Moving (1/6) **7.30** The Goon Show **8.0** The Fair Intellectual Club (6/6) **8.30** These Days (7/10) **8.45** Exile (2/10) **9.0** Joe Lycett's Obsessions (2/4) **9.30** Soundstage (2/5) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** A Good Read (4/9) **10.30** Suck It and See **11.0** Paul Temple **11.30** A Change In… **12.0** Moving (1/6) **12.30** The Goons **1.0** The Fair Intellectual Club (6/6) **1.30** These Days (7/10) **1.45** Exile (2/10) **2.0** The Personality Test (5/6) **2.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (1/6) **3.0** Thackeray (2) **3.45** From the Slips **4.0** A Good Read (4/9) **4.30** Suck It and See **5.0** Paul Temple **5.30** A Change In… **6.0** Moving (1/6) **6.30** The Goons **7.0** The Fair Intellectual Club (6/6) **7.30** These Days (7/10) **7.45** Exile (2/10) **8.0** The Personality Test (5/6) **8.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (1/6) **9.0** Thackeray (2) **9.45** From the Slips **10.0** Joe Lycett's Obsessions (2/4) **10.30** Think the Unthinkable (3/4) **11.0** Rubbish (5/6) **11.30** Helen Keen's It Is Rocket Science (3/4) **11.45** Hearing With Hegley (8/8) **12.0** A Good Read (4/9) **12.30** Suck It and See **1.0** Paul Temple **1.30** A Change In… **2.0** Moving (1/6) **2.30** The Goons **3.0** The Fair Intellectual Club (6/6) **3.30** These Days (7/10) **3.45** Exile (2/10) **4.0** The Personality Test (5/6) **4.30** A Whole 'Nother Story (1/6) **5.0** Thackeray (2) **5.45** From the Slips

# Wednesday 12

**The Misadventures of Romesh Ranganathan, BBC Two, 9pm**
*The comic ends his African odyssey among the lemurs of Madagascar*

## BBC One

**6.0 Breakfast** (T) **9.30** Morning Live (T) **10.45** Scam Interceptors (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.35** Regional News (T) Weather **1.45** News (T) **2.0** Rip Off Britain (T) (R) **2.30** Animal Park (T) (R) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **4.30** The Finish Line (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News (T) Weather **6.55** Party Election Broadcast (T) (R) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

**8.0 The Repair Shop** (T) Experts restore a BMX bike, a dress that once belonged to Danny LaRue and a dynamometer.

**9.0 Who Do You Think You Are?** (T) (R) Alex Scott finds out about the Jewish ancestry on her mother's side and travels to Jamaica for the first time in her life.

**10.0 News** (T)
**10.30 Regional News** (T) Weather
**10.40 The Traitors US** (T) (R) (1 & 2/12) Strangers unite to embark on a game of detection, back-stabbing and trust. In the second episode, the first murder is committed. Hosted by Alan Cumming.
**12.40 Weather for the Week Ahead** (T) **12.45** News (T)

## BBC Two

**6.30 Homes Under the Hammer** (T) (R) **7.30** Caribbean Adventure (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Rick Stein's Food Stories (T) (R) **8.30** Great British Railway Journeys (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Mastermind (T) (R) **2.15** Five Bedrooms (T) (R) **3.0** Searching for Italy (T) (R) **3.45** Farmers' Country Showdown (T) (R) **4.15** Big Cats About the House (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) **6.0** House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Caribbean Adventure (T) **7.0** Your Garden Made Perfect (T) (R)

**8.0 Springwatch** (T) Megan is in Glasgow at the Botanical Gardens, finding out about the wildlife that lives along the River Kelvin.

**9.0 The Misadventures of Romesh Ranganathan** (T) The comedian concludes his African expedition on the island of Madagascar. Last in the series.

**10.0 Inside No 9** Plodding On (T) Last in the series.
**10.30 Newsnight** (T) Weather
**11.05 Unspun World With John Simpson** (T) News review.
**11.30 FILM The Conversation** (Francis Coppola, 1974) (T)
**1.20 Sign Zone** Race Across the World (T) (R) **2.20** The Misadventures of Romesh Ranganathan (T) (R) **3.20** This Is BBC Two (T)

## ITV1

**6.0 Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News (T) Weather **1.55** Local News (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) **3.0** Lingo (T) (R) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) **6.0** Local News (T) **6.30** News (T) **7.0** Tonight: The Leadership Interviews – Rishi Sunak (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T) Belle tries to convince herself that everything is going to be OK, Vinny leans in for a kiss with Gabby, and Ruby vows to turn herself in.

**8.0 Coronation Street** (T) Toyah receives frightening news about Leanne.

**9.0 Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace** (T) Liz from Birmingham and Susanne from east London ask Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell for help tracking down the people who abandoned them as babies.

**10.0 News** (T) Weather
**10.30 Local News** (T) Weather
**10.45 Peston** (T) Political chat.
**11.40 Absolutely India: Mancs in Mumbai** (T) (R) (6/6) The golden festival in Jejuri.
**12.05 ITV Studio Sessions** (T) (R) **12.30** Shop on TV **3.0** The Leadership Interviews (T) (R) **3.25** Unwind With ITV (T) **4.40** D-Day 80 at the Royal Albert Hall (T) (R)

## Channel 4

**6.30 Cheers** (T) (R) Double bill. **7.20** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) Four episodes. **9.10** Frasier (T) (R) Four episodes. **11.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **12.05** News (T) **12.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **1.10** Car SOS (T) (R) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) Double bill. **5.0** Sun, Sea and Selling Houses (T) Mother-and-son team Sharon and Shaun help Chrissy find a holiday home. **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) (R) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

**8.0 Location, Location, Location** (T) The duo catch up with house-hunters who wanted to make the switch to family life.

**9.0 The Fall: Skydive Murder Plot** (T) (2/3) Victoria Cilliers describes what she recalls of the parachute jump, and what made her question her marriage.

**10.0 Queenie** Happy Earthstrong! & Love, Finally (T) (7 & 8/8)
**11.10 Married to a Psychopath** (T) (R) (1 & 2/2) The hunt for a murderer who targeted wealthy women.
**1.05 The Piano: The Final** (T) (R) **2.15 FILM** Two of Us (Filippo Meneghetti, 2020) (T) Romantic drama. **3.50** Iris Prize Best British Shorts (T)

## Channel 5

**6.0 Milkshake! 9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.45** Friends (T) (R) Double bill. **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15 FILM** Blood in the Water (Danny J Boyle, 2024) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Police Interceptors (T) (R) **7.0** The Motorway Hotel (T) (2/4) Wedding coordinator Emily and operations manager Ness head to the local wedding fair to try to sell the charms of a hotel next to the M6 to brides and grooms-to-be.

**8.0 The Motorway** (T) The entire motorway must be shut down after a high-speed motorbike crash.

**9.0 Casualty 24/7: Every Second Counts** (T) There's a shortage of space on the specialist wards that admit casualty patients, meaning the department is at risk of complete gridlock.

**10.0 Trauma Room One** (T) (R) A patient is sped into theatre after a stroke.
**11.05 Emergency Call Out** (T) (R)
**12.05 Motorway Cops** (T) (R) **1.0** Live Casino Show (T) **3.0** Secret Scotland With Susan Calman (T) (R) (7/10) The Central Belt **3.50** How to Give Up Sugar (& Lose Weight) (T) (R) **4.40** Wildlife SOS (T) (R)

## BBC Four

**7.0 Great British Railway Journeys** (T) (R) (7/15) Michael Portillo travels from Belfast to Portrush, looks at the work of the academic and Narnia creator CS Lewis, and visits the Royal Portrush Golf Club. **7.30** Villages By the Sea (T) (R) Ben Robinson examines the history of Robin Hood's Bay.

**8.0 Full Circle With Michael Palin** (T) (R) The actor heads for Borneo and Java.

**8.50 Michael Palin: The Art of Travel** (T) (R) The actor takes an imaginary train journey to Blackpool.

**9.0 Rise of the Nazis: The Manhunt** (T) (R) (1/3) The postwar hunt for the highest-ranking Nazis.

**10.0 Don Warrington and Tony Jordan Remember…** (T)
**10.15 Death in Paradise** Death of a Detective (T) (R) Crime drama with Ben Miller and Kris Marshall.
**11.15 Fever Pitch: The Rise of the Premier League** (T) (R) (3 & 4/4)
**1.15 Full Circle** (T) (R) **2.05** Great British Railway… (T) (R) **2.35** Rise of the Nazis (T) (R)

# Other channels

### BBC Three
**7.0pm** The Traitors US **7.0** The Catch Up **8.0** The Traitors US **9.0** Confessions of a Teenage Fraudster **9.45** The Young Offenders **10.15** The Young Offenders **10.45** Back to Life **11.10** Back to Life **11.35** Confessions of a Teenage Fraudster **12.20** I Kissed a Boy **1.05** Boot Dreams: Now Or Never **2.05** Back to Life **2.30** Back to Life **2.55** Roman Kemp: The Fight for Young Lives

### Dave
**7.20am** Cop Car Workshop **8.05** The Force: Behind the Line **8.40** James May: My Sisters' Top Toys **10.0** Top Gear **11.0** Top Gear **12.0** Storage Hunters UK. Four episodes. **2.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** Hairy Bikers' Best of British **6.0** Rick Stein: From Venice to Istanbul **7.0** Would I Lie to You? **7.35** House of Games **8.20** House of Games **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Would I Lie to You? **1.20** World's Most Dangerous Roads **2.30** Meet the Richardsons **3.0** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **3.25** Whose Line…? USA

### E4
**6.0am** Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA **8.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **9.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** Young Sheldon **10.30** Young Sheldon **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory. Four episodes. **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Young Sheldon **4.30** Young Sheldon **5.0** The Big Bang Theory. Four episodes. **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Come Dine With Me **8.0** Dance Moms **9.0** Gogglebox **10.0** Naked Attraction **11.05** First Dates **12.10** The Big Bang Theory **12.40** The Big Bang Theory **1.15** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **1.45** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.10** Modern Family **2.35** Modern Family **3.0** Dance Moms **3.50** Kitchen Nightmares USA **4.40** The Neighborhood **5.05** The Neighborhood

### Film4
**11.0am FILM** Gunfight at the OK Corral (1957) **1.25 FILM** Three Hours to Kill (1954) **3.05 FILM** Buchanan Rides Alone (1958) **4.45 FILM** Hobson's Choice (1953) **6.55 FILM** Keeping Up With the Joneses (2016) **9.0 FILM** Bad Boys for Life (2020) **11.25 FILM** Hustlers (2019) **1.35 FILM** Sweet Country (2017)

### ITV2
**6.35am** Bugs Bunny Builders **6.50** Mr Bean: The Animated Series **7.0** Mr Bean… **7.15** Mr Bean… **7.25** Scooby-Doo **9.0** World's Funniest Videos **9.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.0** Love Bites **11.0** Love Bites **12.0** Dress to Impress **1.0** Deal Or No Deal **2.0** Family Fortunes **3.0** Veronica Mars **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dress to Impress **6.0** Catchphrase Celebrity Special **7.0** Deal Or No Deal **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Love Island **10.05** G'wed **10.40** Family Guy **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** American Dad! **12.05** American Dad! **12.35** Bob's Burgers **1.05** Bob's Burgers **1.35** Extraordinary **2.10** World's Funniest Videos **2.40** Unwind With ITV

### Sky Max
**6.0am** NCIS: LA **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **10.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** NCIS: LA **12.0** The Flash **1.0** MacGyver **2.0** MacGyver **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** SWAT **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **7.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** A League of Their Own: Mexican Road Trip **9.0** The Walking Dead **10.0** Banshee **11.0** Brassic **12.0** There's Something About Movies **1.0** Brit Cops: Rapid Response **2.0** Road Wars **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** SWAT **5.0** Highway Patrol **5.30** Highway Patrol

### Sky Arts
**6.0am** Verdi: Stiffelio **8.05** Joy of Painting **8.35** Joy of Painting **9.05** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Whoopi Goldberg **12.0** Joy of Painting **12.30** Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** Classic Literature and Cinema **3.0** Sky Arts Book Club Summer Reads Special **4.0** Discovering: Jodie Foster **5.0** Joy of Painting **5.30** Joy of Painting **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.30** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.0** Portrait Artist of the Year 2022 **9.0** Painting Birds **10.0** The Eighties **11.0** Greatest Albums Live **12.0** The Sympathizer **1.0** The: Comeback Special Live at the Royal Albert Hall **2.30** Discovering: U2 **3.0** Wonderland: From JM Barrie to JRR Tolkien **4.0** Cheltenham Literature Festival **5.0** Auction **5.30** Auction

### Sky Atlantic
**6.0am** Fish Town **7.0** Fish Town **7.55** True Blood **9.0** True Blood **10.05** Billions **11.10** Billions **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** The Sopranos **2.25** The Sopranos **3.30** True Blood **4.35** True Blood **5.45** Billions **6.50** Billions **8.0** House of the Dragon: War Room **9.0** The Sympathizer **10.10** The Pacific **11.15** The Wire **12.30** The Newsroom **1.35** The Deuce **2.50** Game of Thrones **4.0** Fish Town **5.0** Fish Town

# On the radio

### Radio 3
**6.30am** Breakfast. Petroc Trelawny presents. **9.30** Essential Classics. With Georgia Mann. **1.0** Classical Live. Tom McKinney presents music from the Hay-on-Wye festival, including Luise Le Beau's Piano Quartet with the Leonore Piano Trio and Lawrence Power. The programme also includes Britten's Diversions for piano left hand and orchestra, Op 21, with the pianist Nicholas McCarthy and the Ulster Orchestra conducted by Carlos Kalmar. **3.0** Choral Evensong: York Minster **4.0** Composer of the Week: Gibbons (3/5) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Recorded at the Isarphilharmonie, Munich. Schoenberg: Gurrelieder. Simon O'Neill (tenor: Waldemar), Dorothea Röschmann (soprano: Tove), Jamie Barton (mezzo-soprano: Waldtaube), Josef Wagner (baritone: Bauer), Peter Hoare (tenor: Klaus-Narr), Thomas Quasthoff (narrator), MDR Radio Chorus, Leipzig, Bavarian Radio SO and Chorus, Simon Rattle. **9.45** The Essay: Bohemians in T-Shirts - Artists (R) (3/5) **10.0** Night Tracks **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

### Radio 4
**6.0am** Today **9.0** More Or Less (4/7) **9.30** To Catch a Scorpion: A Scorpion's Nest (5/8) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The Public Philosopher (R) **11.45** Book of the Week: All That Glitters, by Orlando Whitfield. (3/5) **12.0** News **12.04** You and Yours **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Understand… The UK Election (3/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Drama: The Interrogation - Carly, by Roy Williams. (R) (5/5) **3.0** The Law Show. With Dr Joelle Grogan. (4/4) **3.30** The Artificial Human: Why Can't AI Drive Me Home Yet? Aleks Krotoski and Kevin Fong look at driverless cars, and discover the practical, legal, ethical and technical needs that autonomous vehicles will need to meet and how the fabric of cities might need to change for them to operate. (3/6) **4.0** The Media Show **5.0** PM **6.0** News **6.30** Jessica Fostekew: Sturdy Girl Club - Crossfit. Who says heavy can't be funny? A look at "unladylike" sports and those who do them. (1/4) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Moral Maze. With Michael Buerk and guests. (1/10) **9.0** Being Roman With Mary Beard: The Wolf of Via Vesuvio (R) (6/6) **9.30** All in the Mind (R) **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The Photographer, by Max Porter. (3/5) **11.0** Athena's Cancel Culture (R) (3/4) **11.15** Chloe Petts' Toilet Humour (2/5) **11.30** The Bottom Line: The Decisions That Made Me a Leader - Martha Lane Fox (2/6) **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today

### Radio 4 Extra
**6.0am** Paul Temple and the Gilbert Case (3/8) **6.30** A Change in the Weather (3/5) **7.0** Winston in Love (2/6) **7.30** Hancock's Half Hour (6/16) **8.0** Hazelbeach (5/6) **8.30** These Days (8/10) **8.45** Exile (3/10) **9.0** Robin Ince's Reality Tunnel (2/2) **9.30** Soundstage (3/5) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Here's Looking at You, Parents **11.0** Paul Temple **11.30** A Change In… **12.0** Winston in Love (2/6) **12.30** Hancock **1.0** Hazelbeach (5/6) **1.30** These Days (8/10) **1.45** Exile (3/10) **2.0** Dilemma (4/6) **2.30** Two Doors Down (3/4) **3.0** Thackeray (3) **3.45** Inner Balance **4.0** Here's Looking at You… **5.0** Paul Temple **5.30** A Change In… **6.0** Winston in Love (2/6) **6.30** Hancock **7.0** Hazelbeach (5/6) **7.30** These Days (8/10) **7.45** Exile (3/10) **8.0** Dilemma (4/6) **8.30** Two Doors Down (3/4) **9.0** Thackeray (3) **9.45** Inner Balance **10.0** Robin Ince **10.30** I Think I've Got a Problem (4/4) **11.0** Chain Reaction (4/6) **11.30** Big Booth Too (4/6) **12.0** Here's Looking at You… **1.0** Paul Temple **1.30** A Change In… **2.0** Winston in Love (2/6) **2.30** Hancock **3.0** Hazelbeach (5/6) **3.30** These Days (8/10) **3.45** Exile (3/10) **4.0** Dilemma (4/6) **4.30** Two Doors Down (3/4) **5.0** Thackeray (3) **5.45** Inner Balance

# Thursday 13



**We Are Lady Parts, Channel 4, 10pm & 10.35pm**
*Into each recording studio some rain must fall...*

## BBC One

**6.0 Breakfast** (T) **9.30** Morning Live (T) **10.45** Scam Interceptors (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.35** Regional News (T) Weather **1.45** News (T) **2.0** Rip Off Britain (T) **2.30** Animal Park (T) (R) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **4.30** The Finish Line (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News (T) Weather **6.55** Party Election Broadcast (T) (R) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

**8.0 Question Time** (T) Fiona Bruce chairs a general election edition of the topical debate in Edinburgh.

**9.0 The Outlaws** (T) (3/5) While Gabby considers motherhood, the Dean's defence is winning his case, and the police are closing in on the gang. Can the outlaws clear their names?

**10.0 News** (T)
**10.30 Regional News** (T) Weather
**10.40** FILM **Yesterday** (Danny Boyle, 2019) (T) A musician wakes up to find he is the only person who remembers the Beatles. Comedy starring Himesh Patel and Lily James.
**12.25 Newscast** (T) **12.55** Rebus (T) (R) (4/6) **1.45** Weather (T) **1.50** News (T)

## BBC Two

**6.45 Escape to the Country** (T) (R) **7.30** Clive Myrie's Caribbean Adventure (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Gardeners' World (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Mastermind (T) (R) Double bill. **2.45** Five Bedrooms (T) (R) (7/8) **3.30** Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy (T) (R) **4.15** Great Bear Stakeout (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Clive Myrie's Caribbean Adventure (T) **7.0** Earth's Great Rivers: Mississippi (T) (R)

**8.0 Springwatch** (T) Chris Packham, Iolo Williams and Michaela Strachan bid farewell to 2024's nests and recap series highlights.

**9.0 Chinook: Zulu Delta 576** (T) (1/2) A look at the 1994 helicopter crash in the Mull of Kintyre that killed Northern Ireland's leading intelligence personnel.

**10.0 Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing** (T) (R) (6/6)
**10.30 Newsnight** (T) Weather
**11.05 Misadventures of Romesh Ranganathan** (T) (R) (3/3)
**12.05 Sign Zone** The Wrong Man (T) (R) **1.05** Blood on the Dance Floor (T) (R) **2.05** Doctor Who (T) (R) (6/8) **2.50** Lost Boys & Fairies (T) (R) (2/3) **3.50** This Is BBC Two (T)

## ITV1

**6.0 Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News (T) Weather **1.55** Local News (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) The team are back in Blackpool, where Jan Keyne wrestles over a police truncheon, and Matt Taylor is on the lookout for a bargain buy. **3.0** Lingo (T) (R) Adil Ray hosts. **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) With Ben Shephard. **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) Bradley Walsh hosts. **6.0** Local News (T) **6.30** News (T) Weather

**7.30 Emmerdale** (T) Belle finds herself in danger, and Vinny is left riddled with guilt.

**8.30 The ITV Election Debate** (T) Leaders or senior representatives of the Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats, SNP, Reform UK, Greens and Plaid Cymru face questions from Julie Etchingham.

**10.10 News** (T) Weather
**10.40 Local News** (T) Weather
**10.55 Emergency Nurses: A&E Stories** (T) (R) Kat and Becca help student nurse Meredith, and Dulcie looks after her oldest patient yet.
**12.0 Shop on TV** **3.0** In for a Penny (T) (R) **3.35** Unwind (T) **5.05** Katie Piper's Breakfast Show (T) (R)

## Channel 4

**6.30 Cheers** (T) (R) Double bill. **7.20** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) Four episodes. **9.10** Frasier (T) (R) Four episodes. **11.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **12.05** News (T) **12.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **1.10** Car SOS (T) (R) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) Double bill. **5.0** Sun, Sea and Selling Houses (T) In Almería, Steve and Sharon Garner help a couple relocating from the UK. **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) (R) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

**8.0 The Supervet: Noel Fitzpatrick** (T) A rescue special, featuring some of the animals for whom Noel has provided life-saving treatment.

**9.0 The Fall: Skydive Murder Plot** (T) (3/3) The women at the heart of the case reveal the effects of coercive control.

**10.0 We Are Lady Parts** (T) (5 & 6/6) The comedy concludes.
**11.20 Celebrity Gogglebox** (T) (R)
**12.25 Sky Coppers** (T) (R) **1.15** 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **2.0** Queenie (T) (R) (5–8/8) **3.45** Best British Shorts (T) (R) **4.15** Grand Designs Australia (T) (R) **5.10** Kirstie's House of Craft (T) (R) **5.25** Frasier (T) (R) **5.50** Countdown (T) (R)

## Channel 5

**6.0 Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.45** Friends (T) (R) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM The Gold Digger Killer (Robin Hays, 2020) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Police Interceptors (T) (R) **7.0** The Motorway Hotel (T) (3/4) Elton John tribute act Paul is expected to drop in, new joint co-ordinator Chloe needs to navigate her first wedding, and the staff also cope with a massive downpour.

**8.0 Happy Campers: The Caravan Park** (T) At Holiday Resort Unity's site in Somerset, 15-year-old George dislocates his knee and has to get to A&E.

**9.0 The Hotel Inspector** (T) Alex Polizzi returns to Loughborough Grange, a guesthouse whose owners were in need of a shake-up.

**10.0 Belmarsh: Serial Killers and High Security** (T) (R) (2/2)
**11.05** FILM **King of Thieves** (James Marsh, 2018) (T) Fact-based crime drama starring Michael Caine.
**1.15 Live Casino** (T) **3.15** Secret Scotland (T) (R) **4.05** The Railways That Built Britain With Chris Tarrant (T) (R) **4.50** Wildlife SOS (T) (R) **5.15** House Doctor (T) (R)

## BBC Four

**7.0 Great British Railway Journeys** (T) (R) (8/15) Larne to Dumfries. Michael Portillo continues his journey from Northern Ireland across the water to Scotland. Leaving from the seaport of Larne, he reaches Stranraer and the Mull of Galloway. **7.30** Villages By the Sea (T) (R) The history of Walberswick.

**8.0 A House Through Time** (T) (R) (4/4) The story of the occupiers of the house at the outbreak of the second world war.

**9.0 King Otto and Football's Greek Gods** (T) The story of how German football coach Otto Rehhagel led the Greek national team to European supremacy.

**10.30** FILM **The Graduate** (Mike Nichols, 1967) (T) Comedy-drama starring Dustin Hoffman, Anne Bancroft and Katharine Ross.
**12.15 The Sky at Night** (T) (R) **12.45** Queen Victoria's Letters: A Monarch Unveiled (T) (R) (1/2) **1.45** Great British Railway... (T) (R) **2.15** A House Through Time (T) (R)

# Other channels

### BBC Three
**7.0pm** Top Gear **7.0** The Catch Up **8.0** The Traitors US **9.0** FILM Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa (2013) **10.25** High: Surviving a Dubai Drugs Bust **10.55** I Kissed a Boy **11.45** Confessions of a Teenage Fraudster **12.30** Drugs Map of Britain: Monkey Dust & Crack (3 & 4/4) **1.25** Top Gear **2.25** Bad Education: Reunion Special **3.10** Confessions of a Teenage Fraudster

### Dave
**7.20am** Cop Car Workshop **8.05** The Force: Behind the Line **8.40** James May's Top Toys **10.0** Top Gear **11.0** Top Gear **12.0** Storage Hunters UK. Four episodes. **2.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** Hairy Bikers' Best of British **6.0** Rick Stein: From Venice to Istanbul **7.0** Would I Lie to You? **7.40** House of Games **8.20** House of Games **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Would I Lie to You? **1.15** Alan Davies: As Yet Untitled **2.25** Dave Gorman: Modern Life Is Goodish **3.10** World's Most Dangerous Roads

### E4
**6.0am** Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA **8.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **9.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** Young Sheldon **10.30** Young Sheldon **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory. Four episodes. **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Young Sheldon **4.30** Young Sheldon **5.0** The Big Bang Theory. Four episodes. **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Come Dine With Me **8.0** Dance Moms **9.0** Gogglebox **10.0** Naked Attraction **11.05** First Dates **12.10** The Big Bang Theory **12.40** The Big Bang Theory **1.15** Rick and Morty **1.45** Smiling Friends **2.0** Smiling Friends **2.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.35** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.0** Dance Moms **3.50** Modern Family **4.15** Modern Family **4.40** The Neighborhood **5.05** The Neighborhood

### Film4
**11.0am** FILM Pool of London (1951) **12.45** FILM It Should Happen to You (1954) **2.30** FILM The Ghost and Mrs Muir (1947) **4.35** FILM Daleks Invasion Earth: 2150 AD (1966) **6.20** FILM Only the Brave (2017) **9.0** FILM Scream (2022) **11.15** FILM Monster (2003) **1.25** FILM To Live and Die in LA (1985)

### ITV2
**6.35am** Bugs Bunny Builders **6.50** Mr Bean: The Animated Series **7.0** Mr Bean... **7.15** Mr Bean... **7.25** Scooby-Doo **9.0** World's Funniest Videos **9.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.0** Love Bites **11.0** Love Bites **12.0** Dress to Impress **1.0** Deal Or No Deal **2.0** Family Fortunes **3.0** Veronica Mars **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dress to Impress **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Deal Or No Deal **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Love Island **10.05** Tell Me Everything **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **12.35** American Dad! **1.05** Bob's Burgers **1.35** Bob's Burgers **2.05** Don't Hate the Playaz **2.45** Unwind

### Sky Max
**6.0am** NCIS: LA **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **10.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** NCIS: LA **12.0** The Flash **1.0** MacGyver **2.0** MacGyver **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** SWAT **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **7.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** A Discovery of Witches **9.0** The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live **10.0** A League of Their Own: Mexican Road Trip **11.0** The Walking Dead **12.0** SWAT **1.0** Entourage **1.30** Entourage **2.0** Road Wars **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** SWAT **5.0** Highway Patrol **5.30** Highway Patrol

### Sky Arts
**6.0am** Golden Age: Miloš at Blenheim Palace **7.0** FILM Janine Jansen: Falling for Stradivari (2021) **8.0** Joy of Painting **8.30** Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Jodie Foster **12.0** Joy of Painting **12.30** Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** South Bank Show **3.0** The Art Mysteries **3.30** The Art Mysteries **4.0** Discovering: Peter Ustinov **5.0** Joy of Painting **5.30** Joy of Painting **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.30** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.0** Painting Birds **9.0** Discovering: Michelle Pfeiffer **10.0** John Wayne: America at All Costs **11.0** Dr Jack and Mr Nicholson **12.0** Katharine Hepburn: Call Me Kate **2.0** Mae West: Dirty Blonde **3.05** A Play in a Day **4.05** Cheltenham Literature Festival **5.0** Auction **5.30** Auction

### Sky Atlantic
**6.0am** Guest Wing **7.0** Guest Wing **7.55** True Blood **9.0** True Blood **10.05** Billions **11.10** Billions **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** Sopranos **2.25** Sopranos **3.30** Six Feet Under **4.35** Six Feet Under **5.40** Billions **6.45** Billions **7.50** Game of Thrones **9.0** House of the Dragon: War Room **10.0** Band of Brothers **11.20** Succession **12.30** The Pacific **1.40** The Wire **2.50** Game of Thrones **4.0** Guest Wing **5.0** Guest Wing

# On the radio

### Radio 3
**6.30am** Breakfast. Petroc Trelawny presents. **9.30** Essential Classics. With Georgia Mann. **1.0** News **1.02** Classical Live. Highlights from the recent Hay-on-Wye festival.Presenter Tom McKinney also marks the first week of this year's Aldeburgh festival with music by composers with very close historic associations with the festival – Imogen Holst, Oliver Knussen and Benjamin Britten. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Gibbons (4/5) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Presented by Linton Stephens and recorded last Thursday at the BBC Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff. Dvořák: Cello Concerto in B minor, Op 104. Jennifer Higdon: blue cathedral. WL Dawson: Negro Folk Symphony. Alisa Weilerstein (cello), BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Ryan Bancroft. **9.45** The Essay: Bohemians in T-Shirts – Musicians (R) (4/5) **10.0** Night Tracks **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

### Radio 4
**6.0am** Today **9.0** In Our Time (11/14) **9.45** Exercise Clever With Michael Mosley (1/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** This Cultural Life (11/14) **11.45** Book of the Week: All That Glitters, by Orlando Whitfield. (4/5) **12.0** News **12.04** The Bottom Line (2/8) **12.32** Sliced Bread. Greg Foot and his guests search for the scientific evidence behind the bold claims made about products. (6/10) **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Understand... The UK Election (4/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Drama: The Queen of the Isle of Wight, by Barney Norris. (R) **3.0** Open Country: Anneka Rice and Maggi Hambling in Suffolk (11/11) **3.27** Radio 4 Appeal: Sand Dams Worldwide (R) **3.30** Word of Mouth: Little Green Men – The Secret Rules of Word Order. Michael Rosen explores the mysterious rules of word order with linguist Dr Laura Bailey. (6/6) **4.0** The Briefing Room (11/14) **4.30** Inside Science **5.0** PM **6.0** News **6.30** Rhysearch: Are They Watching Us? (R) (3/3) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Media Show (R) **9.0** Loose Ends (R) **9.45** Empire of Tea: Cosy with a Kick. Sathnam Sanghera recounts the story of how Britain's national drink and its imperial background helped shape the modern world. (1/10) **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The Photographer, by Max Porter. (4/5) **11.0** The Today Podcast. Last in the series. **11.30** The Bottom Line: The Decisions That Made Me a Leader (R) **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today

### Radio 4 Extra
**6.0am** Paul Temple and the Gilbert Case (4/8) **6.30** A Change in the Weather (4/5) **7.0** Patterson (3/8) **7.30** Dad's Army (14/20) **8.0** The Break (6/6) **8.30** These Days (9/10) **8.45** Exile (4/10) **9.0** Rhysearch (2/3) **9.30** Soundstage (4/5) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Great Lives (9/9) **10.30** Shakespeare in India **11.0** Paul Temple **11.30** A Change In... **12.0** Patterson (3/8) **12.30** Dad's Army (14/20) **1.0** The Break (6/6) **1.30** These Days (9/10) **1.45** Exile (4/10) **2.0** The Unbelievable Truth (5/6) **2.30** The Leopard in Autumn (5/6) **3.0** Thackeray (4) **3.45** Monsoon Selection Board **4.0** Great Lives (9/9) **4.30** Shakespeare in India **5.0** Paul Temple **5.30** A Change In... **6.0** Patterson (3/8) **6.30** Dad's Army (14/20) **7.0** The Break (6/6) **7.30** These Days (9/10) **7.45** Exile (4/10) **8.0** The Unbelievable Truth (5/6) **8.30** The Leopard in Autumn (5/6) **9.0** Thackeray (4) **9.45** Monsoon Selection Board **10.0** Rhysearch (2/3) **10.30** The Guns of Adam Riches (1/4) **11.0** Clare in the Community (5/6) **11.30** And the Winner Is (4/6) **12.0** Great Lives (9/9) **12.30** Shakespeare in India **1.0** Paul Temple **1.30** A Change In... **2.0** Patterson (3/8) **2.30** Dad's Army (14/20) **3.0** The Break (6/6) **3.30** These Days (9/10) **3.45** Exile (4/10) **4.0** The Unbelievable Truth (5/6) **4.30** The Leopard in Autumn (5/6) **5.0** Thackeray (4) **5.45** Monsoon Selection Board

# Friday 14

**Jerrod Carmichael Reality Show**
**Sky Comedy, 10pm & 10.35pm**
*More honesty and self-revelation in the final double bill of the series*

## BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.30** Morning Live (T) **10.45** Scam Interceptors (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.35** Regional News (T) **1.45** News (T) **2.0** Hope Street (T) **2.45** Escape to the Country (T) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **4.30** The Finish Line (T) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News (T) **6.55** Party Election Broadcast (T) (R) **7.0** One Show (T) **7.30** Make It at Market (T) A woodturner and an upcycler seek advice.

8.0 **Would I Lie to You?** (T) (R) With Maya Jama, Roisin Conaty, Roman Kemp and Xand van Tulleken.
8.30 **Outnumbered** Into the Wilderness (T) (R) (4/7)
9.0 **Death in Paradise** (T) (R) (1/8) New Year's Eve celebrations are cut short when a masked man stabs a woman in her own home.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **Euro 2024 Highlights** (T) Germany v Scotland.
11.25 FILM **Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy** (Tomas Alfredson, 2011) (T) Cold war thriller starring Gary Oldman and Colin Firth.
1.25 **Euro 2024 Match Replay** (T) **3.05** Weather for the Week Ahead **3.10** News (T)

## BBC Two

6.30 **Homes Under the Hammer** (T) (R) **7.30** Clive Myrie's Caribbean Adventure (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Mammals (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Mastermind (T) (R) **2.45** Five Bedrooms (T) (R) **3.35** Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy (T) (R) **4.15** Great Bear Stakeout (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Clive Myrie's Caribbean Adventure (T) **7.0** Digging for Britain: The Greatest Discoveries (T) (R) **7.30** Beechgrove Garden (T)

8.0 **Gardeners' World** (T) The team are in Birmingham for the annual Gardeners' World Live event.
9.0 **Hidden Treasures of the National Trust** (T) A mysterious portrait of a servant reveals its secrets, and two hidden treasures are brought back into the light. Last in the series.

10.0 **QI** Tubular (T) (R) With Sara Pascoe, Bridget Christie and Deborah Frances-White.
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.05 FILM **Dear Evan Hansen** (Stephen Chbosky, 2021) (T) Film adaptation of the award-winning musical.
1.10 **Sign Zone** Panorama (T) (R) **1.40** Fabulous Feasts (T) (R) **2.40** Touring Toolshed (T) (R) **3.10** This Is BBC Two (T)

## ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News (T) Weather **1.55** Local News (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) The dealers set up at Crewe Hall, where James Layte bargains for a page turner and Simon Schneider browses some celebrity reading material. Will Jo Brayshaw walk away with some Victorian shoes? **3.0** Lingo (T) (R) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) **6.0** Local News (T) **6.15** News (T) Weather

6.30 **Live Uefa Euro 2024** (T) Germany v Scotland (kick-off 8pm) Mark Pougatch presents coverage of the Group A match at the Munich Football Arena. Analysis from Graeme Souness, Roy Keane, Ian Wright and Laura Woods and reports by Connie McLaughlin.

10.45 **News** (T) Weather
11.20 **Local News** (T) Weather
11.30 FILM **Terminator 2: Judgment Day** (James Cameron, 1991) (T) Sci-fi adventure sequel starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Linda Hamilton.
1.40 **Shop on TV** **3.0** The Larkins (T) (R) (5/6) **3.50** Unwind (T) **5.05** Katie Piper's Breakfast Show (T) (R)

## Channel 4

6.30 **Cheers** (T) (R) Double bill. **7.20** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) Four episodes. **9.10** Frasier (T) (R) Four episodes. **11.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **12.05** News (T) **12.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **1.10** Car SOS (T) (R) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) Double bill. **5.0** Sun, Sea and Selling Houses (T) In Calp, Jo and Andrew Alderton help Vicky and Mac who are looking for a retirement home. **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) (R) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News

8.0 **The Dog House** (T) (R) Trini contends with sassy fluffball Balloo, while Roz and John are desperate to help their cockapoo Marnie.
9.0 **Celebrity Gogglebox** (T) A rolling cast of famous faces – including Rylan, Mel B, Nick Grimshaw and Clare Balding – talk about telly.

10.0 **The Nevermets** (T) (4/6)
11.05 FILM **The Inbetweeners Movie** (Ben Palmer, 2011) (T) TV comedy spin-off.
12.55 FILM **Skyscraper** (2018) (T) Action thriller starring Dwayne Johnson. **2.35** 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **3.25** Come Dine With Me (T) (R) Five episodes. **5.35** Escape to the Chateau (T) (R)

## Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.45** Friends (T) (R) Double bill. **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Dangerous Love (David DeCoteau, 2022) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Argos: How Do They Really Do It? (T) (R) **7.0** The Motorway Hotel (T) (4/4) Head chef James tries out new apprentice Kaylan, and the annual national Maize Maze awards is meant to be in town, but snowfall sends the M6 into chaos.

8.0 **Dalgliesh** (T) Adam and Miskin attend the murder scene of Rita O'Keefe, whose nephew Garry Ashe emerges as chief suspect. At his trial, defence barrister Venetia Aldridge smoothly secures an acquittal, but then she is also found dead. Drama with Bertie Carvel and Carlyss Peer.

10.0 **Live: UK v Germany Fight Night** (T) Macaulay McGowan v Abass Baraou. European super welterweight bout.
12.05 **Ultimate Police Interceptors** (T) (R) **1.0** Entertainment News (T) **1.15** Live Casino Show (T) **3.15** Secret Scotland (T) (R) **4.05** Britain's Greatest Bridges (T) (R) Britannia

## BBC Four

7.0 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) Mark Goodier presents the edition of 28 March 1996, featuring Ken Doh, Bis, Mark Snow, Gina G, Cast, PJ & Duncan and Dubstar. **7.30** Top of the Pops (T) (R) Dale Winton hosts the edition of 4 April 1996, featuring Kadoc, Ocean Colour Scene, Foo Fighters, Gina G, Lionel Richie and Pulp.

8.0 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1987, with ABC, Beastie Boys and Run DMC.
8.30 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) With Queen, Toyah and Adam Ant. From 1982.
9.0 **Disco at the BBC: Volume 2** (T) (R) Classics from the BBC archive, including Baccara, George McCrae and Anita Ward.

10.0 **Disco: Soundtrack of a Revolution** Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now (T) (R) (2/3) How disco conquered the mainstream charts.
11.0 **Boogie Fever: A TOTP2 Disco Special** (T) (R) Steve Wright presents.
12.30 **Sounds of the 70s** (T) (R) **1.0** Disco at the BBC: Volume 2 (T) (R) **2.0** Top of the Pops (T) (R) (As 7–9pm.)

## Other channels

### BBC Three
**7.0pm** Top Gear **7.0** The Catch Up **8.0** The Traitors US **9.0** Paranormal: The Village That Saw Aliens (1 & 2/4) **10.0** A Very British Cult **11.0** Ladhood **11.25** Ladhood **11.50** I Kissed a Boy **12.40** Confessions of a Teenage Fraudster **1.25** Boot Dreams: Now Or Never **2.25** Ladhood **2.50** Paranormal… (1 & 2/4) **3.50** Press X to Continue

### Dave
**7.20am** Cop Car Workshop **8.05** The Force: Behind the Line **8.40** Top Gear **9.40** Top Gear **10.40** Top Gear **12.0** Storage Hunters UK. Four episodes. **2.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** Hairy Bikers' Best of British **6.0** Rick Stein's Secret France **7.0** Would I Lie to You? **7.40** House of Games **8.20** House of Games **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Have I Got 2021 News for You **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Would I Lie to You? **1.20** Alan Davies: As Yet Untitled **2.30** Dave Gorman: Modern Life Is Goodish **3.20** Room 101

### E4
**6.0am** Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA **8.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **9.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **10.0** Young Sheldon **10.30** Young Sheldon **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory. Four episodes. **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Young Sheldon **4.30** Young Sheldon **5.0** The Big Bang Theory. Four episodes. **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Come Dine With Me **8.0** Dance Moms **9.0** FILM Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines (2003) **11.05** Naked Attraction **12.10** The Big Bang Theory **12.40** The Big Bang Theory **1.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **1.40** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.15** Modern Family **2.40** Modern Family **3.05** Modern Family **3.30** Dance Moms **4.15** The Neighborhood **4.40** The Neighborhood **5.05** Brooklyn Nine-Nine

### Film4
**11.0am** FILM 13 Rue Madeleine (1946) **12.55** FILM Anne of the Indies (1951) **2.35** FILM Rio Grande (1950) **4.45** FILM A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood (2019) **6.55** FILM Sleepless in Seattle (1993) **9.0** FILM Mission: Impossible - Fallout (2018) **11.55** FILM Con Air (1997) **2.10** FILM Slice (2018)

### ITV2
**6.35am** Bugs Bunny Builders **6.50** Mr Bean: The Animated Series **7.0** Mr Bean… **7.15** Mr Bean… **7.25** Scooby-Doo **9.0** World's Funniest Videos **9.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.0** Love Bites **11.0** Love Bites **12.0** Dress to Impress **1.0** Deal Or No Deal **2.0** Family Fortunes **3.0** Veronica Mars **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dress to Impress **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Deal Or No Deal **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Love Island **10.05** Stand Up Sketch Show **10.35** Family Guy **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** American Dad! **12.05** American Dad! **12.35** Sex Lives of College Girls **1.10** Sex Lives of College Girls **1.45** Don't Hate the Playaz **2.30** Unwind

### Sky Max
**6.0am** NCIS: LA **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **10.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** NCIS: LA **12.0** The Flash **1.0** MacGyver **2.0** MacGyver **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** SWAT **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **7.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** A League of Their Own: Mexican Road Trip **9.0** The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live **10.0** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **10.45** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **11.30** The Walking Dead **12.30** Brit Cops: Rapid Response **1.30** Road Wars **2.0** Road Wars **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** SWAT **5.0** Highway Patrol **5.30** Highway Patrol

### Sky Arts
**6.0am** Charles Hazlewood: Beethoven and Me **7.0** Classic FM Rising Stars 2022 **8.0** Joy of Painting **8.30** Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Peter Ustinov **12.0** Joy of Painting **12.30** Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **1.55** Mae West: Dirty Blonde **3.0** Camille Pissarro: The Father of Impressionism **4.0** Discovering: Ian McKellen **5.0** Joy of Painting **5.30** Joy of Painting **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.30** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.0** How the Beatles Changed the World **10.15** Discovering: John Lennon **11.15** Stuart Sutcliffe: The Lost Beatle **12.30** Guy Garvey: From the Vaults **1.30** Live from the Artists Den **2.45** Led Zeppelin: In the Light **4.0** Cheltenham Literature Festival **5.0** Auction **5.30** Auction

### Sky Atlantic
**6.0am** The Guest Wing **7.0** The Guest Wing **7.55** Six Feet Under **9.05** Six Feet Under **10.05** Billions **11.10** Billions **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** The Sopranos **2.25** The Sopranos **3.30** Six Feet Under **4.30** Six Feet Under **5.30** Billions **6.35** Gomorrah **7.35** Game of Thrones **8.50** House of the Dragon **10.0** House of the Dragon: War Room **11.0** The Time Traveler's Wife **12.0** The Time Traveler's Wife **1.0** The Time Traveler's Wife **1.55** Euphoria **3.05** Game of Thrones **4.20** The Guest Wing **5.10** Guest Wing

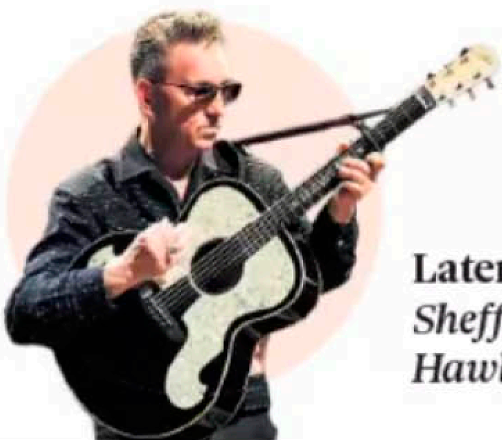
## On the radio

### Radio 3
**6.30am** Breakfast. Petroc Trelawny presents. **9.30** Essential Classics. With Georgia Mann. **1.0** News **1.02** Classical Live. French chamber music from last month's Hay-on-Wye festival, and recordings of music reflecting England. The programme ends with Britten's *A Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andrew Davis. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Gibbons (5/5) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** Friday Night Is Music Night. The BBC National Orchestra of Wales in classics from stage and screen, with singers Juliette Crosbie and Tim Howar. Stephen Bell is the conductor. Presented by Clare Teal. **9.45** The Essay: Bohemians in T-Shirts - Beats (R) (5/5) **10.0** Late Junction: Gone With the Wind. Oud playing by Sam Shelabi from Montreal, and wordless opera by Baudouin de Jaer. **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

### Radio 4
**6.0am** Today **9.0** Desert Island Discs: Shirine Khoury-Haq, CEO of the Co-Op Group (R) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The Food Programme **11.45** Book of the Week: All That Glitters, by Orlando Whitfield. (5/5) **12.0** News **12.04** Rare Earth: Can Writers Save the Planet? Nature writing is going through a renaissance. Tom Heap and Helen Czerski are joined on stage at the Hay festival by Mark Cocker, Philippa Forrester and Chris Thorogood to discuss its purpose, why it is important, and how it can help shape people's understanding of the natural world. (2/10) **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Understand… The UK Election (5/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Drama: The Specialist, by Matthew Broughton. Infections keep multiplying, and village secrets start to emerge. Medical thriller starring Saran Morgan and Sion Daniel Young. (3/6) **2.45** Child: Birthday Cake (27/27) **3.0** Gardeners' Question Time **3.45** Short Works: The Invention of Abandonment, by Malachy Tallack. **4.0** Last Word **4.30** More Or Less (R) **5.0** PM **6.0** News **6.30** The News Quiz (2/7) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Add to Playlist (4/6) **8.0** Any Questions? With Alex Forsyth. **9.0** Free Thinking (11/13) **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The Photographer, by Max Porter. (5/5) **11.0** Americast **11.30** The Bottom Line: The Decisions That Made Me a Leader (R) **12.0** News **12.30** Book of the Week (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Exercise Clever With Michael Mosley (R)

### Radio 4 Extra
**6.0am** Paul Temple and the Gilbert Case (5/8) **6.30** A Change in the Weather (5/5) **7.0** The Older Woman (5/6) **7.30** The Burkiss Way (3/7) **8.0** Says on the Tin (5/6) **8.30** These Days (10/10) **8.45** Exile (5/10) **9.0** The Tim Vine Chat Show: Summer Extra Special **9.30** Soundstage (5/5) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Soul Music (3/4) **10.30** Shakespeare in South Africa **11.0** Paul Temple **11.30** A Change In… **12.0** The Older Woman (5/6) **12.30** The Burkiss Way (3/7) **1.0** Says on the Tin (5/6) **1.30** These Days (10/10) **1.45** Exile (5/10) **2.0** Foul Play **2.30** Arrested Development (2/4) **3.0** Melissa Murray: Dead Men's Shoes **4.0** Soul Music (3/4) **4.30** Shakespeare in South Africa **5.0** Paul Temple **5.30** A Change In… **6.0** The Older Woman (5/6) **6.30** The Burkiss Way (3/7) **7.0** Says on the Tin (5/6) **7.30** These Days (10/10) **7.45** Exile (5/10) **8.0** Foul Play **8.30** Arrested Development (2/4) **9.0** Melissa Murray… **10.0** Tim Vine **10.30** Laura Solon: Talking and Not Talking (3/6) **11.0** The Problem With Adam Bloom (4/6) **11.30** Crème de la Crime (3/4) **11.45** Irish Micks and Legends (4/4) **12.0** Soul Music (3/4) **12.30** Shakespeare in South Africa **1.0** Paul Temple **1.30** A Change in the Weather (5/5) **2.0** The Older Woman (5/6) **2.30** The Burkiss Way (3/7) **3.0** Says on the Tin (5/6) **3.30** These Days (10/10) **3.45** Exile (5/10) **4.0** Foul Play **4.30** Arrested Development (2/4) **5.0** Melissa Murray…

# Saturday 15



**Later... BBC Two, 9.55pm**
*Sheffield sensation Richard Hawley hits Ally Pally*

## BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.0** Saturday Kitchen Live (T) **10.30** Trooping the Colour: The King's Birthday Parade (T) Clare Balding introduces live coverage from Horse Guards Parade in London. **1.10** News (T) Weather **1.25** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **2.10** Money for Nothing (T) (R) **2.55** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.55** FILM Wreck-It Ralph (Rich Moore, 2012) (T) **5.30** News (T) **5.40** Regional News (T) Weather **5.45** Celebrity Bridge of Lies (T) A team from *BBC Morning Live* take part.

6.30 **Doctor Who** The Legend of Ruby Sunday (T) Part one of the two-part finale. The Doctor and UNIT investigate Ruby's past.

7.20 **MOTD Live: UEFA Euro 2024** (T) Italy v Albania (kick-off 8pm) Coverage of the Group B match from the BVB Stadion Dortmund.

10.10 **News** (T) Weather

10.30 **Rooney 2004: World at His Feet** (T)

11.0 **Pitch Invasion: How the Scottish and Irish Changed Football** Glory (T) (R) (3/3)

12.0 **Top 10: Euro 2024 Matches** (T) **12.30** Doctor Who: Unleashed (T) (R) **1.0** Superman & Lois (T) (9/13) **1.40** Euro 2024 Match Replay (T) **3.25** News (T)

## BBC Two

6.15 **Children's programmes** **9.0** Gardeners' World (T) (R) **10.0** Christine's Garden (T) (R) **10.30** Coast to Coast Food Festival (T) (R) **11.0** Coast to Coast Food Festival (T) (R) **11.30** Jay's Yorkshire Workshop (T) (R) **12.30** FILM The Titfield Thunderbolt (Charles Crichton, 1953) (T) **1.55** FILM A Man for All Seasons (Fred Zinnemann, 1966) (T) **3.50** The Great British Sewing Bee (T) (R) **4.50** Flog It! (T) (R) **5.50** Trooping the Colour (T) **7.20** Celebrity Antiques Road Trip (T) (R)

8.20 **Casualty** (T) As a storm threatens Holby, a tragedy forces Cam to make a tough decision.

9.10 **Rebus** (T) (5/6) In the wake of a horrific attack, John faces difficult questions from Gill Templer and Malcolm Fox about his dealings with both Cafferty and Michael.

9.55 **Later... With Jools Holland** (T) With Richard Hawley, Remi Wolf, Nia Archives, Stephen Wilson Jr, Sahra Halgan. The host chats to Steel Pulse's Mykaell Riley.

10.40 **LGBTQ+ Hits at the BBC** (T) (R) George Michael, Boy George, Beth Ditto...

11.40 **Pride Hits at the BBC** (T) (R)

12.40 **Best of Glastonbury 2016** (T) (R) **2.50** This Is BBC Two

## ITV1

6.0 FILM **Thunderball** (Terence Young, 1965) (T) **8.25** Katie Piper's Breakfast Show (T) **9.25** News (T) **9.30** James Martin's Saturday Morning (T) (R) **11.40** National Trust Cook Off (T) **12.40** James Martin's Great British Adventure (T) (R) **1.05** News (T) **1.14** Local News (T) **1.15** Live Euro 2024 (T) Hungary v Switzerland (kick-off 2pm) The Group A match from Cologne Stadium. **4.15** Live Euro 2024 (T) Spain v Croatia (kick-off 5pm) The Group B match in Berlin. **7.30** News (T) **7.40** Local News (T)

7.50 FILM **Dirty Dancing** (Emile Ardolino, 1987) (T) A dance instructor at a 1960s resort hotel fears his career will be jeopardised when his regular partner is forced to pull out of an important show. Romantic drama, with Patrick Swayze, Jennifer Grey, Jerry Orbach.

9.50 **News** (T) Weather

10.09 **Local News** (T) Weather

10.10 **It'll Be Alright on the Night** (T) (R) The biggest TV shows of 2023 share their funniest mistakes.

11.05 **Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace** (T) (R) (1/3)

12.10 **Euro 2024 Highlights** (T) **1.10** Shop on TV **3.0** Maternity: Broken Trust (T) (R) **4.10** Unwind (T) **5.10** Deal Or No Deal (T) (R)

## Channel 4

6.10 **Everybody Loves Raymond** (T) (R) Double bill. **7.0** Frasier (T) (R) Double bill. **7.50** FILM Alvin and the Chipmunks (Tim Hill, 2007) (T) **9.40** The Simpsons (T) (R) Four episodes. **11.40** FILM The Kid Who Would Be King (Joe Cornish, 2019) (T) **2.0** Couples Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **3.0** Four in a Bed (T) (R) Five episodes. **5.35** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **6.30** News (T) **7.0** Devon and Cornwall: Fishing Lives (T) (R) A special episode celebrating the counties' shared heritage of fishing.

8.0 FILM **Fisherman's Friends** (Chris Foggin, 2019) (T) A music executive heads out to a Cornish fishing village on a mission to recruit a group of 10 local fishermen to record an album of sea shanties. Comedy starring James Purefoy, Daniel Mays and Tuppence Middleton.

10.10 FILM **Air Force One** (Wolfgang Petersen, 1997) (T) The US president takes on terrorists who have hijacked his plane. Action thriller with Harrison Ford.

12.30 FILM **Transformers: The Last Knight** (Michael Bay, 2017) (T) Sci-fi adventure sequel. **3.05** 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **3.55** Hollyoaks Omnibus (T) (R)

## Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **8.50** Sponge Bob SquarePants (T) (R) **9.05** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) (R) Triple bill. **11.45** Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly (T) (R) Triple bill. **2.40** Our Yorkshire Farm (T) (R) The Owens try their hand at self-sufficiency with their very first dairy cow. **3.40** Our Yorkshire Farm at Christmas (T) (R) **4.35** Man About the House: 50 Years of Laughs (T) (R) **6.05** News (T) **6.10** Party Election Broadcast (T) **6.15** Bruce Forsyth: Mr Saturday Night (T) (R)

7.30 **The King's Birthday: Charles at 75** (T) A documentary exploring the relationship between Elizabeth II and her eldest son.

9.0 **Kate and Queen Elizabeth: A Special Relationship** (T) A look at the bond between the Princess of Wales and Elizabeth II.

10.0 **When TV Favourites Go Horribly Wrong** (T) (R) Richard Madeley narrates.

11.55 **Greatest Ever Wind Ups** (T) New series. Classic hidden camera pranks from shows such as *Game for a Laugh*, narrated by Jon Culshaw.

1.0 **Live Casino Show** (T) **3.0** Secret Scotland With Susan Calman (T) (R) The Trossachs and the West

## BBC Four

7.0 **How the Wild West Was Won With Ray Mears** Deserts (T) (R) (3/3) How the landscapes of America's five great deserts challenged the pioneers' westward push and how the US cavalry struggled in these landscapes.

8.0 **Castles: Britain's Fortified History** Kingdom of Conquest (T) (R) (2/3)

9.0 **Jana: Marked for Life** (T) (3 & 4/6) Jana breaks into Monica's house and steals a DVD that contains records of her therapy sessions as a child. Madeleine Martin stars with Suzanne Reuter. In Swedish with subtitles.

10.35 **Imagine... Ian Rankin and the Case of the Disappearing Detective** (T) (R) Profile of the writer.

11.35 **Mark Lawson Talks to Ian Rankin** (T) (R)

12.35 **One Foot in the Grave** (T) (R) **1.05** Butterflies (T) (R) **1.35** Castles: Britain's Fortified History (T) (R) **2.35** How the Wild West Was Won... (T) (R)

# Other channels

### BBC Three

**7.0pm** The Film Fan's Guide to John Krasinski **7.20** Doctor Who: Unleashed **7.50** EastEnders **8.20** EastEnders **8.50** Zen Motoring **9.0** Suits **9.45** Suits **10.25** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **10.55** Two Pints of Lager... **11.25** Laugh Lessons **11.30** Paranormal: The Village That Saw Aliens (1 & 2/4) **12.30** I Kissed a Boy **1.10** Confessions of a Teenage Fraudster **1.55** Boot Dreams: Now Or Never **2.55** Two Pints of Lager... **3.25** Two Pints of Lager...

### Dave

**7.10am** Cop Car Workshop **8.0** Storage Hunters UK **8.30** Storage Hunters UK **9.0** Train Truckers **10.0** Train Truckers **11.0** Train Truckers **12.0** Storage Hunters UK **12.30** Storage Hunters UK **1.0** Storage Hunters UK **1.30** Storage Hunters UK **2.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **3.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **4.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **5.0** The Americas With Simon Reeve **6.0** Would I Lie to You? **6.40** Would I Lie to You? **7.20** My Family **8.0** My Family **8.40** Not Going Out **9.20** Not Going Out **10.0** Not Going Out **10.35** QI **11.15** QI **11.55** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **12.55** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **1.55** Live at the Apollo **2.55** Room 101 **3.25** Room 101

### E4

**6.0am** Lego Masters Australia **7.05** Made In Chelsea **8.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA **10.10** Modern Family **10.45** Modern Family **11.10** Modern Family **11.45** Modern Family **12.15** Modern Family **12.50** FILM Zathura: A Space Adventure (2005) **2.50** FILM Peter Rabbit (2018) **4.40** The Big Bang Theory **5.05** The Big Bang Theory **5.35** The Big Bang Theory **6.05** The Big Bang Theory **6.35** The Big Bang Theory **7.05** FILM 13 Going on 30 (2004) **9.0** Celebrity Gogglebox **10.0** Gogglebox **11.05** Gogglebox **12.05** First Dates **1.15** First Dates **2.20** Gogglebox **3.15** Gogglebox **4.10** Modern Family **4.35** Modern Family **5.0** Modern Family **5.25** Modern Family

### Film4

**11.0am** FILM The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958) **12.45** FILM Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa (2008) **2.30** FILM Galaxy Quest (1999) **4.30** FILM Star Trek: Nemesis (2002) **6.45** FILM Charlie's Angels (2019) **9.0** FILM Commando (1985) **10.50** FILM Dead Man's Shoes (2004) **12.35** FILM No One Lives (2012) **2.15** FILM The Autopsy of Jane Doe (2016)

### ITV2

**6.0am** Craig of the Creek **6.10** Teen Titans Go! **6.20** Teen Titans Go! **6.35** Bugs Bunny Builders **6.50** Mr Bean: The Animated Series **7.05** Dodo **7.15** Dodo **7.30** FILM Scooby-Doo! Wrestlemania Mystery (2014) **9.0** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **9.30** Love Bites **10.30** Dress to Impress **11.30** Dress to Impress **12.30** Dress to Impress **1.30** American Ninja Warrior **3.25** Catchphrase **4.10** Bob's Burgers **4.40** Bob's Burgers **5.10** FILM Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs (2009) (FYI Daily is at 6.10) **7.0** FILM Evan Almighty (2007) (FYI Daily is at 8.05) **9.0** Love Island: Unseen Bits **10.05** Olivia Attwood: The Price of Perfection **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **12.35** American Dad! **1.05** Iain Stirling's CelebAbility **1.50** All American **2.45** Unwind

### Sky Max

**6.0am** The Flash **7.0** The Flash **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Grimm **10.0** Grimm **11.0** Grimm **12.0** Grimm **1.0** Hawaii Five-0 **2.0** Hawaii Five-0 **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** Hawaii Five-0 **5.0** Hawaii Five-0 **6.0** FILM Escape from New York (1981) **8.0** A League of Their Own: Mexican Road Trip **9.0** A Discovery of Witches **10.0** Flintoff's Road to Nowhere **11.0** Rob & Romesh v the Three Lions **12.0** Banshee **1.05** There's Something About Movies **2.0** SWAT **3.0** We're Here **4.10** Stop, Search, Seize **5.05** Stop...

### Sky Arts

**6.0am** La Wally **8.20** Tales of the Unexpected **8.50** Tales of the Unexpected **9.25** Tales of the Unexpected **9.55** Tales of the Unexpected **10.30** Tales of the Unexpected **11.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **12.0** Painting Birds With Jim and Nancy Moir **1.0** André Rieu: Making the Magic **2.0** The Who: Tommy Live at the Royal Albert Hall **3.30** The Who Sell Out: Classic Albums **4.30** Discovering: Elton John **5.30** Ella Fitzgerald: Live at Montreux **7.0** Bowie: The Man Who Changed the World **9.0** Isle of Wight Festival 2023 **11.0** Isle of Wight Festival 2023 **1.0** Isle of Wight Festival 2023 **3.0** Blondie: Song By Song **3.30** Blondie: Song By Song **4.0** Isle of Wight Festival Greatest Hits **4.30** Isle of Wight Festival Greatest Hits **5.0** Marvin Gaye/Pat Benatar: Music Icons

### Sky Atlantic

**6.0am** Fish Town **7.05** Fish Town **8.05** Fish Town **9.05** Billions **10.10** Billions **11.15** Billions **12.20** Billions **1.25** Billions **2.30** Euphoria **3.35** Euphoria **4.45** House of the Dragon: War Room **5.45** Game of Thrones. All six episodes of season eight of the fantasy action drama, back to back. **1.55** The Time Traveler's Wife **2.55** The Sopranos **4.0** Fish Town **5.0** Fish Town

# On the radio

### Radio 3

**6.30am** Breakfast. With Elizabeth Alker. **9.0** Saturday Morning. Tom Service is at the 75th Aldeburgh festival, where he talks to the pianist Steven Osborne and the composer Judith Weir. Plus, music that captures Britten and the festival. **12.0** Earlier... With Jools Holland **1.0** Music Matters: 25 Years of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra – From Strength to Strength. Clemency Burton-Hill charts the ensemble's achievements. (5/6) **2.0** Record Review. Jonathan Cross chooses his favourite version of Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* in Building a Library, while Allyson Devenish reviews a selection of new releases. Andrew McGregor presents. **4.0** Sound of Cinema. Matthew Sweet is joined by the Polish composer Abel Korzeniowski. **5.0** This Classical Life. Jess Gillam is joined by the trumpet player Matilda Lloyd. **6.0** Opera on 3: Gaetano Donizetti – Lucia di Lammermoor. Michael Gibson (Normanno), Artur Ruciński (Enrico Ashton), Nadine Sierra (Lucia), Rachael Lloyd (Alisa), Xabier Anduaga (Edgardo), Marko Mimica (Raimondo Bidebent), Andrés Presno (Arturo Bucklaw), Royal Opera House, Giacomo Sagripanti. **9.0** Music Planet: Capercaillie at 40. With Karen Matheson from the noted Scottish folk band. **10.30** New Music Show. A set by the soprano Héloïse Werner and friends at Milton Court, London. **12.30** Through the Night

### Radio 4

**6.0am** News and Papers **6.07** Open Country: Anneka Rice and Maggi Hambling in Suffolk (R) **6.30** Farming Today This Week **7.0** Today **9.0** Saturday Live. Nikki Bedi hosts the weekend entertainment show. **10.0** Your Place Or Mine: Ainsley Harriott – Angkor Wat, Siem Reap, Cambodia (11/13) **10.30** The Kitchen Cabinet: Woolwich (6/7) **11.0** Newscast. Adam Fleming and co discuss the week's big stories. **11.30** From Our Own Correspondent **12.0** News **12.04** Money Box **12.30** The News Quiz (R) **1.0** News **1.15** Any Questions? (R) **2.15** Any Answers? **3.0** The Archers (R) **3.15** Drama: Orwell v Kafka – Restless Dreams, by Dan Rebellato. Anton Lesser and Tracy-Ann Oberman star. **4.15** Weekend Woman's Hour **5.0** Saturday PM **5.30** Sliced Bread (R) (6/10) **5.54** Shipping Forecast **6.0** News **6.15** Loose Ends. Clive Anderson presents, with guests Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Tara Fitzgerald, Paul Sinha, Grace Campbell, Bess Atwell and Jazz Emu. **7.0** Profile **7.15** This Cultural Life (R) **8.0** Archive on 4: Fitted and Kitted. Ruby Tandoh and Deborah Sugg Ryan are on the hunt for the ideal kitchen, with suggestions from the past 100 years of kitchen design. **9.0** The Moral Maze (R) **10.0** News **10.15** The Food Programme (R) **11.0** Michael Spicer: No Room: Red & Black (7 & 8/10) (8/10) **11.30** Nature Table (R) (2/6) **12.0** News **12.15** Open Book: Claire Messud (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Bells on Sunday: St Mary, Bronllys, Powys **5.45** In Touch (R)

### Radio 4 Extra

**6.0am** The Mystery of Charles Dickens **7.30** The Testaments Omnibus (3/3) **8.45** Marriott's Monologues (4/8) **9.0** Educated Evans (3/4) **9.30** The Arthur Haynes Show **10.0** Great Lives (2/3) **11.0** The Mystery of Charles Dickens **12.30** The Testaments Omnibus (3/3) **1.45** Marriott's Monologues (4/8) **2.0** Educated Evans (3/4) **2.30** Arthur Haynes **3.0** Great Lives (2/3) **4.0** The Mysteries of Udolpho (1/2) **5.0** The Mystery of Charles Dickens **6.30** The Testaments Omnibus (3/3) **7.45** Marriott's Monologues (4/8) **8.0** Educated Evans (3/4) **8.30** Arthur Haynes **9.0** Great Lives (2/3) **10.0** Meet David Sedaris (2/6) **10.30** The Nick Revell Show (3/6) **11.0** Son of Cliche (5/8) **11.30** The Masterson Inheritance (6/6) **12.0** The Mysteries of Udolpho (1/2) **1.0** The Mystery of Charles Dickens **2.30** The Testaments Omnibus (3/3) **3.45** Marriott's Monologues (4/8) **4.0** Educated Evans (3/4) **4.30** Arthur Haynes **5.0** Great Lives (2/3)

# Today's television

**On Thin Ice: Putin v Greenpeace, BBC Two, 9pm & 9.30pm**
*How the environmental group tried to stop Russian drilling*

## BBC One

6.0 Breakfast (T) 9.0 Sunday (T) 10.0 Politics England (T) 10.30 Sunday Morning Live (T) 11.30 Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) 12.30 Bargain Hunt (T) (R) 1.0 News (T) 1.10 Weather (T) 1.15 Songs of Praise (T) 1.50 Points of View (T) 2.05 Money for Nothing (T) (R) 2.50 FILM A Dog's Journey (Gail Mancuso, 2019) (T) 4.35 The Green Planet (T) (R) 5.35 News (T) 5.50 Regional News (T) Weather 6.0 Countryfile (T) Includes a report on farming in south-west Wales. 7.0 Antiques Roadshow (T) (R)

8.0 FILM **Darkest Hour** (Joe Wright, 2017) (T) In May 1940, the British prime minister, Winston Churchill, seeks to rally the nation against Germany's advance across western Europe. Period drama starring Gary Oldman, Lily James and Kristin Scott Thomas.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.25 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.30 **High: Surviving a Dubai Drugs Bust** (T) (R) (1-3/5) A musician is arrested on drugs charges in Dubai following a wild week. Three episodes of the drama, with Kereim Daley.
12.0 **Celebrity Bridge of Lies** (T) (R) 12.45 Weather (T) 12.50 News (T)

## BBC Two

6.15 Glorious Gardens from Above (T) (R) 7.0 Countryfile (T) (R) 8.0 Our Coast (T) (R) 9.0 Beechgrove Garden (T) (R) 9.30 Landward (T) 10.0 Saturday Kitchen Best Bites (T) 11.30 Ready Steady Cook (T) (R) 12.15 FILM The Big Country (William Wyler, 1958) (T) 2.55 Talking Pictures: Gregory Peck (T) (R) 3.30 Natural World: Galápagos – Islands of Change (T) (R) 4.15 FILM Pride & Prejudice (Joe Wright, 2005) (T) 6.15 Flog It! (T) (R) 7.0 This Farming Life (T) (R)

8.0 **The Americas With Simon Reeve** (T) (4/5) A trip from Texas to southern Mexico.
9.0 **On Thin Ice: Putin v Greenpeace** (T) (1 & 2/6) Documentary following climate activists on a mission to disrupt Russia's Arctic oil production, in which they are tailed by Russsian security forces.

10.0 FILM **The Phantom of the Open** (Craig Roberts, 2021) (T) Fact-based sporting comedy-drama starring Mark Rylance, Sally Hawkins, Rhys Ifans.
11.40 **Best of Glastonbury 2017** (T) (R) Festival highlights.
1.45 **Sign Zone** Question Time (T) (R) 2.45 Thief at the British Museum (T) (R) 3.15 This Is BBC Two (T)

## ITV1

6.0 Great British Adventure (T) (R) 6.30 Spanish Adventure (T) (R) 7.25 National Trust Cook Off (T) (R) 8.25 Breakfast Show (T) 9.25 News (T) 9.30 Love Your Weekend (T) 11.25 Gardening Club (T) (R) 12.25 News (T) Weather 12.40 FILM The Croods (Chris Sanders, Kirk De Micco, 2013) (T) 2.30 Tipping Point: Best Ever Finals (T) (R) 3.0 Soccer Aid: The Warm Up (T) 4.0 D-Day 80 at the Royal Albert Hall (T) 5.30 News (T) Weather 5.45 Local News (T)

6.0 **Soccer Aid for Unicef 2024** (T) England v Soccer Aid World XI (kick-off 7.30pm) Dermot O'Leary and Alex Scott present live coverage of the charity fixture, which takes place at Stamford Bridge. Celebrity players include Mo Farah, Jill Scott, Usain Bolt, Lee Mack and Eden Hazard.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.15 **Maternity: Broken Trust** (T) An investigation into alleged failures in care at Nottingham University Hospitals Trust.
11.35 **Absolutely India: Mancs in Mumbai** (T) (R) (5/6)
12.0 **Shop on TV** 3.0 Motorsport UK (T) (R) 3.50 Unwind With ITV (T) 5.05 National Trust Cook Off (T) (R)

## Channel 4

6.15 Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) 6.40 Frasier (T) (R) Double bill. 7.35 Simpsons (T) (R) Double bill. 8.30 F1: Canadian Grand Prix Qualifying Highlights (T) (R) From the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve in Montreal. 9.30 Sunday Brunch (T) 12.30 Simpsons (T) (R) Four episodes. 2.30 FILM Kindergarten Cop (Ivan Reitman, 1990) (T) 4.35 FILM The Day the Earth Stood Still (Scott Derrickson, 2008) (T) 6.30 News (T) 7.0 Great Celebrity Bake Off for Stand Up to Cancer (T) (R)

8.0 **Secret France With Dick and Angel** (T) The Strawbridges head to Gascony, learning how to make an intricate pastry.
9.0 **The Piano: The Final** (T) The seven performers deal with last-minute changes and overcome nerves as the big concert arrives. Last in the series.

10.15 **Celebrity Gogglebox** (T) (R)
11.20 **Gogglebox** (T) (R)
12.20 **F1: Canadian Grand Prix Highlights** (T) The ninth round of the season. 1.45 Rooney (T) (R) 3.35 iTales (T) (R) 4.05 Iris Prize Best British Shorts (T) 4.20 Grand Designs (T) (R) 5.15 Kirstie's House of Craft (T) (R) 5.25 Frasier (T) (R) 5.50 Countdown (T) (R)

## Channel 5

6.0 Milkshake! 8.45 Sponge Bob SquarePants (T) (R) 9.0 Entertainment News (T) 9.10 Jane McDonald: My Yorkshire (T) (R) 10.0 Cruising With Jane McDonald (T) (R) Trips to the Adriatic and the Caribbean. 12.0 Isle of Wight: Jewel of the South (T) (R) (3 & 4/6) 2.0 Live: UK's Strongest Man 2024 (T) Coverage of the final from the Vindico Arena in Cardiff. 5.0 Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em: 50 Years of Laughs (T) (R) 6.25 News (T) 6.30 Michael Crawford: Mr Entertainment (T) (R)

8.0 **World's Most Luxurious Retirement Homes** (T) Residences in Miami, Colorado and West Sussex.
9.0 **Shetland: Scotland's Wondrous Isles** (T) A look at Scalloway's annual fire festival through the eyes of JR Umphray, the main organiser and ceremonial leader of the event.

10.0 **Tommy Cooper: 30 Funniest Moments** (T) (R) Sketches and routines from the comic's career.
12.0 **Greatest Ever Celebrity Wind Ups** (T) (R) 1.50 Live Casino Show (T) 3.50 Secret Scotland (T) (R) 4.40 Entertainment News (T) 4.50 Wildlife SOS (T) (R) 5.15 House Doctor (T) (R) 5.40 Entertainment News

## BBC Four

7.0 **Life of a Mountain: A Year on Helvellyn** (T) (R) Documentary capturing a year in the life of the Lake District's most popular peak, featuring insights from those that live by, care for and visit the mountain.

8.30 **Inside Classical: Brahms Symphony No 4** (T) Kate Molleson introduces the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Gemma New at City Halls, Glasgow, performing a symphony by Johannes Brahms in a programme of music that spans three centuries.

10.0 **Renny Rye Remembers: Karaoke** (T) The director looks back on Dennis Potter's penultimate drama series, a collaboration between Channel 4 and the BBC.
10.15 **Karaoke** (T) (R) All four episodes of Potter's drama.
1.50 **The Hidden Story of English** (T) (R) 2.20 Life of a Mountain: Helvellyn (T) (R)

# Other channels

### BBC Three
**7.0pm** Doctor Who **7.45** Doctor Who: Unleashed **8.15** Shark Tank **8.55** Ryan Tricks on the Streets **9.0** Crashed: $800m Festival Fail **10.0** FILM Blue Story (2019) **11.30** Bad Education **12.0** Bad Education **12.30** Dave's Games **12.45** I Kissed a Boy **1.35** Such Brave Girls **2.0** Such Brave Girls **2.30** Such Brave Girls **2.55** Bad Education **3.25** Bad Education

### Dave
**7.10am** Cop Car Workshop **8.0** Storage Hunters UK **8.30** Storage Hunters UK **9.0** Abandoned Engineering **10.0** Abandoned Engineering **11.0** Top Gear **12.0** Top Gear **1.0** Storage Hunters UK **1.30** Storage Hunters UK **2.0** Storage Hunters UK **2.30** Storage Hunters UK **3.0** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **3.30** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **4.0** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **4.30** Rick Stein's French Odyssey **5.0** Motorhoming With Merton & Webster **6.0** Cornwall With Simon Reeve **7.0** Storage Hunters UK **7.30** Storage Hunters UK **8.0** World's Most Dangerous Roads **9.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **10.0** QI **10.35** Mock the Week **11.15** Mock the Week **12.0** Live at the Apollo **1.0** Red Dwarf **1.40** Red Dwarf **2.20** Two Pints of Lager and a Packet of Crisps **2.50** Two Pints of Lager… **3.30** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA

### E4
**6.0am** Hollyoaks Omnibus **8.15** Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.15** Kitchen Nightmares USA **10.10** Kitchen Nightmares USA **11.15** The Great Celebrity Bake Off for Stand Up to Cancer **12.20** FILM Zathura: A Space Adventure (2005) **2.25** FILM Peter Rabbit (2018) **4.10** The Big Bang Theory **4.40** The Big Bang Theory **5.10** The Big Bang Theory **5.40** The Big Bang Theory **6.05** The Big Bang Theory **6.35** The Big Bang Theory **7.05** FILM 13 Going on 30 (2004) **9.0** FILM Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines (2003) **11.05** Open House: The Great Sex Experiment **12.15** The Inbetweeners **12.50** The Inbetweeners **1.20** Naked Attraction **2.25** First Dates **3.20** Modern Family **3.45** Hollyoaks Omnibus

### Film4
**11.0am** FILM Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa (2008) **12.45** FILM Daleks Invasion Earth: 2150AD (1966) **2.30** FILM Galaxy Quest (1999) **4.35** FILM Fatherhood (2021) **6.50** FILM A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood (2019) **9.0** FILM The Equalizer 2 (2018) **11.20** FILM Blue Steel (1989) **1.25** FILM The Outsiders (1983)

### ITV2
**6.0am** Craig of the Creek **6.10** Teen Titans Go! **6.25** Teen Titans Go! **6.40** Mr Bean: The Animated Series **6.50** Mr Bean: The Animated Series **7.05** Dodo **7.20** Dodo **7.30** FILM Big Top Scooby-Doo! (2012) **9.0** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **9.15** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.15** Love Bites **11.15** Dress to Impress **12.15** Dress to Impress **1.15** In for a Penny Disney Special **2.0** In With a Shout for Soccer Aid **3.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **4.0** Bob's Burgers **4.25** Bob's Burgers **4.55** FILM Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs (2009) (FYI Daily is at 6pm) **6.45** FILM Pitch Perfect 2 (2015) (FYI Daily is at 7.45) **9.0** Love Island **10.0** Love Island: Aftersun **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **12.35** American Dad! **1.05** All American **2.05** Unwind

### Sky Max
**6.0am** Highway Patrol **6.30** Highway Patrol **7.0** NCIS: LA **8.0** NCIS: LA **9.0** NCIS: LA **10.0** NCIS: LA **11.0** NCIS: LA **12.0** Grimm **1.0** Grimm **2.0** Grimm **3.0** Grimm **4.0** The Walking Dead **5.0** The Walking Dead **6.0** The Walking Dead **7.0** The Walking Dead **8.0** The Walking Dead **9.0** SWAT **10.0** The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live **11.05** A Discovery of Witches **12.0** A League of Their Own: Mexican Road Trip **1.0** Brassic **2.0** There's Something About Movies **3.0** Road Wars **4.0** Stop, Search, Seize **5.0** Stop…

### Sky Arts
**6.0am** Arts Uncovered **6.15** Pavarotti in Central Park **8.30** Tales of the Unexpected **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.30** Tales of the Unexpected **11.0** The Joy of Painting **11.30** The Joy of Painting **12.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **12.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **1.0** Comedy Legends **2.0** André Rieu: Welcome to My World **3.0** Grand Ole Opry **4.0** Discovering: Jeremy Irons **5.0** Peter O'Toole: Along the Sky Road to Aqaba **7.0** Painting Birds **8.0** FILM Limelight (1952) **10.40** Comedy Legends **11.40** Born in Chicago **1.20** Eric Clapton: Nothing But the Blues **3.35** Discovering: Eric Clapton **4.0** The Great Songwriters **5.0** Chicago/Journey: Music Icons

### Sky Atlantic
**6.0am** Fish Town **7.0** Fish Town **8.0** Fish Town **9.0** True Blood **10.05** True Blood **11.10** True Blood **12.15** True Blood **1.20** True Blood **2.25** Billions **3.30** Billions **4.40** Billions **5.45** Billions **6.55** Billions **8.0** House of the Dragon: War Room **9.0** The Tattooist of Auschwitz **10.10** The Making of the Tattooist of Auschwitz **10.45** The Sympathizer **12.0** Euphoria **1.0** Euphoria **2.05** House of the Dragon **3.10** The Time Traveler's Wife **4.10** Fish Town **5.05** Fish Town

# On the radio

### Radio 3
**6.30am** Breakfast. Tom McKinney presents. **9.0** Sunday Morning. Today's playlist includes a rarely heard Irish rhapsody by Ernest John Moeran. **12.0** Private Passions. Michael Berkeley's guest is the physicist and broadcaster Brian Cox. **1.30** Music Map: A Journey to Arvo Pärt's Spiegel im Spiegel **3.0** Choral Evensong: Bolton Parish Church (R) **4.0** Jazz Record Requests **5.0** The Early Music Show: A Curious Mind. Ensemble Augelletti perform at the Beverley and East Riding early music festival. **6.0** Words and Music: The Georgians (R) **7.15** Sunday Feature: Searching for the Songs of Bukhara. Monica Whitlock goes in search of the court music of Bukhara, now in modern Uzbekistan but once the capital of a multicultural emirate. **8.0** Drama on 3: Killer. Dan Rebellato's dramatisation of Eugène Ionesco's play *Tueur sans gages*. Toby Jones stars. (R) **9.20** New Generation Artists. Tom Borrow plays Schumann's Fantasie in C major. **10.0** Night Tracks **11.30** Unclassified: Will Gregory's Listening Chair **12.30** Through the Night

### Radio 4
**6.0am** News **6.05** Thinking Allowed: Opioids (R) **6.35** On Your Farm: The Salad Factory. Charlotte Smith explores the potential and pitfalls of a state-of-the-art vertical farm in Gloucs. **7.0** News **7.0** Sunday Papers **7.10** Sunday **7.54** Radio 4 Appeal: Sand Dams Worldwide. With Liz Bonnin. **8.0** News **8.0** Sunday Papers **8.10** Sunday Worship **8.48** A Point of View **8.58** Tweet of the Day **9.0** Broadcasting House. Anita Anand presents. **10.0** Desert Island Discs: Shirine Khoury-Haq, CEO of the Co-Op Group (5/14) **11.0** The Archers Omnibus **12.15** Profile **12.30** I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue (R) (4/6) **1.0** The World This Weekend **1.30** Orwell v Kafka: Uneasy Dreams. Helen Lewis and Ian Hislop discuss how the two writers tackled anxiety and alienation. (4/6) **2.0** Gardeners' Question Time (R) **2.45** Opening Lines: The Trial **3.0** Drama: The Trial. Ed Harris's dramatisation of Franz Kafka's novel about a man who is arrested without being told why, and must defend himself without knowing the crime of which he is accused. Iwan Rheon and Phil Davis star. **4.0** Orwell v Kafka: But I'm Not Guilty! (5/6) **4.30** Nature Table. Sue Perkins hosts the panelshow. (2/6) **5.0** Witness History: Russian Ballerina Defects to the West. Jane Wilkinson tells the story of Natalia Makarova. (10/26) **5.10** This Cultural Life (R) **6.0** News **6.15** Pick of the Week. With Tessa Dunlop. **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Orwell v Kafka (6/6) **7.45** Profile (R) **8.0** Word of Mouth at the Hay Festival (R) **8.30** Last Word (R) **9.0** Money Box (R) **9.25** Radio 4 Appeal (R) **9.30** From Our Own Correspondent **10.0** The Westminster Hour **11.0** In Our Time (R) **11.45** Short Works: Dawn, by Emma Hooper (R) **12.0** News **12.15** Your Place Or Mine: Dame Sheila Hancock – Luberon, Provence, France (10/13) **12.45** Bells on Sunday (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today

### Radio 4 Extra
**6.0am** Desert Island Discs Revisited **6.45** David Attenborough's Life Stories **7.0** Poetry Extra **7.30** These Days Omnibus (2/2) **8.50** D-Day Minus **10.0** Educating Archie **10.30** Much Binding in the Marsh **11.0** Desert Island Discs Revisited **11.45** Life Stories **12.0** Poetry Extra **12.30** These Days Omnibus (2/2) **1.50** D-Day Minus **3.0** Educating Archie **3.30** Much Binding… **4.0** Oneira (1/5) **4.30** Ray Bradbury's Tales of the Bizarre (1/6) **5.0** Desert Island Discs Revisited **5.45** Life Stories **6.0** Poetry Extra **6.30** These Days Omnibus (2/2) **7.50** D-Day Minus **9.0** Educating Archie **9.30** Much Binding in the Marsh **10.0** Craig Brown's Lost Diaries (6/6) **10.30** Little Lifetimes (2/6) **10.45** Paperback Hell (2/4) **11.0** Romance and Adventure **11.30** Life: An Idiot's Guide **12.0** Oneira (1/5) **12.30** Ray Bradbury's Tales of the Bizarre (1/6) **1.0** Desert Island Discs Revisited **1.45** Life Stories **2.0** Poetry Extra **2.30** These Days Omnibus (2/2) **3.50** D-Day Minus **5.0** Educating Archie **5.30** Much Binding…